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Opening the Classroom Doors: Stories of English Teachers' Experiences with Three Eras of Educational Reform

Kelli Sowerbrower

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, OPENING THE CLASSROOM DOORS: STORIES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH THREE ERAS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM, by KELLI SOWERBROWER, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

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Opening the Classroom Doors: Stories of English Teachers' Experiences with Three Eras of Educational Reform

by

Kelli Sowerbrower

Under the Direction of Michelle Zoss

ABSTRACT

This study examined what has largely been overlooked in educational research: What happens to educational reforms in teachers' classrooms when they shut the door and teach? Few researchers have talked with teachers to understand their experiences with educational reforms. I framed this narrative inquiry in sociocultural theories of culture (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978) and experience (Dewey, 1938/1997) to provide lenses for understanding the history, setting, activities, and artifacts that informed how veteran teachers taught during different eras of reform. The participants were three English teachers who started teaching shortly before significant moments in educational reform began to take hold in a small town high school. I employed narrative theory (Bruner, 1987) toward the collection, analysis, and reporting of data to position the study in ways that honored the stories and experiences of the

teachers. The methodology included detailed, multi-layered analyses of reform documents as well as multiple individual and group interviews. This study opened the door of three classrooms and told the story of three teachers as they experienced reforms over time from the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court ruling to the publishing of the report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) to the passing of the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind (2002). I found that veteran teachers who believed their practices were already in line with the mandates passed down, altered little in their teaching practices. In the culture of this English department, traditions and years of experience played a more valuable and steadfast role than the educational reforms that came from the federal and state governments.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher stories, Experiences, English language arts, High school, Culture, Narrative, Narrative theory, Sociocultural theory, Narrative inquiry, Educational reforms, Brown v. Board, A Nation at Risk, No Child Left Behind

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KELLI SOWERBROWER

A Dissertation

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DEDICATION

To Ms. Jay, Ms. Cardinal, and Ms. Robbins, your songs are important and valuable, keep singing. Harper Lee reminded me to listen and listen well. Thank you for letting me listen and record your stories, your songs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once upon a time there was a girl who was so loved and supported by her parents, ***Bill*** and ***Lynn***, that she thought she was a princess. The princess loved all things bright and pink, but she especially loved to accessorize with shoes and purses. She had always dreamed of a special hat. This was no ordinary hat, but one that was kind of odd and only scholars were allowed to wear it. She had to become a scholar in order to get one, but she had no idea of how to accomplish this goal. She called on the strength of ***Jesus*** to give her all that she needed to pursue the hat. And she called on her Jedi master, ***Yoda***, to share his Force with her, because she knew this hat would not be easy to earn.

Dr. Doug Moore heard that the princess was considering graduate school, but she was questioning her ability to pass the entrance exam. All he told her was to stop stressing about the exam, take it, and then turn in the application without looking back. She took his advice and the journey for the hat began. Without his simple advice, she might still be studying for the exam today.

Once the application was turned in, the next step was a group interview at the university the princess wanted to attend. The first person the princess met was a prince who wanted the same hat. They immediately bonded, and ***David Brown*** was the shoulder the princess cried on, the hand she shook in celebration, and the ear she bent in frustration, confusion, or anger for the next four years. During the journey, the prince was usually in front of her, beside her, or right behind her. The two became inseparable, and together knew their goals would be reached.

Also during the group interview, the princess met a scholar named ***Dr. Mary Deming***. Dr. Deming saw something special in this princess and took her under her wing. Dr. Deming and the princess grew into a great team, and the princess started her studies to become a scholar who could wear the hat. Sadly, Dr. Deming tired of wearing her hat and traded it for a visor to sit by the lake. The princess was led to ***Dr. Michelle Zoss***. While nervous about getting lost in the program since Dr. Deming left, the girl put her faith and hopes into Dr. Zoss. This relationship grew into more than the advisor/advisee connection. Dr. Zoss's role in this story was that of a fairy godmother: The new advisor was full of wisdom, gifts, confidence, humor, and trust. She played a critical role in the princess's journey. When

the princess fell down, Dr. Zoss was always there to pick her up. When the princess needed to celebrate, Dr. Zoss was there. Dr. Zoss found the talents that the princess had, and used them to allow her to reach the dream of owning her very own special hat. This fairy godmother watched with pride as the princess grew into a scholar.

For the first class that the princess took, she had a new purse, the perfect outfit, the correct textbook, and a color-coordinating notebook. But when class began, she realized that she did not include a writing utensil in her collection. Asking the student who sat in front of her, she met ***Alisha White***. Not only was Alisha always prepared with exactly what the princess needed, she shared all that she had with a hug and a smile. This class also introduced the princess to a group of women who became her cohort and her friends. ***Eliza Allen, Kay Wynter-Hoyte, Annmarie Jackson, Sanjuana Rodriguez, Tarika Sullivan, Natasha Thornton,*** and the princess took classes together, met for dinners, celebrations, practice defenses, and study groups. All of these ladies pushed each other to get their own hat. And, one by one, each accomplished this goal, or are well on our way to it.

During the journey, Dr. Zoss insisted that the prince and the princess leave their comfort zone and meet and learn from scholars outside their graduate program. It was at NCTE, in Orlando, Florida that the princess not only met her scholarly heroes, but also was introduced to a group of students from all over the U.S., each working toward earning the special hat. This group formed a leadership team, wrote proposals and presented together, created a newsletter, and became a conference family—making sure that everyone had a place to stay and was not alone at conferences across the country. ***Alan Brown, Lindy Johnson, Luke Rodesiler,*** and ***Nicole Sieben*** became another group for the princess to count on when times got really difficult when trying to get that darn hat. Because of this team, the princess was able to find her strength in writing proposals and presenting at conferences and was never alone no matter where she found herself.

While taking classes on her journey to the hat, the princess met professors who taught her, frustrated her, pushed her, and made her laugh. Two of these professors found a special role in the princess's journey. ***Dr. Daphne Greenberg*** praised the princess in a ways that no other professor had.

Dr. Greenberg appreciated the quirkiness of the princess and accepted her for who she was and for the hat that she longed for. When considering dissertation topics, the princess found ***Dr. Philo Hutcheson***, a scholar with a fierce sense of humor, an unwavering confidence in his students, and a knowing smile that brought comfort in moments of complete chaos. When the princess struggled in her confidence, or just needed a laugh, Dr. Hutcheson was the committee member who knew exactly what to say.

As course work came to an end, and the princess took the required exams, she needed one more professor to balance her committee. Once again, Dr. Zoss came to the rescue and suggested ***Dr. Dana Fox***. Not sure of what to expect upon meeting this scholar, the princess found another mentor who always had the right suggestion or author when the princess was struggling to find answers.

In order to become a scholar and get the hat, the princess had to create a study of her own, one that included the songs and stories of teachers, because at the heart of the princess was a dedication to teaching and teachers. She believed teachers were the foundation of all the greats. Like the princess, most people succeeded because of teachers who cared, had passion, and accepted nothing but the best from their students. This dissertation is the story of three rock star teachers: ***Ms. Jay, Ms. Cardinal,*** and ***Ms. Robbins***. Their stories allowed the princess to achieve her dream of becoming a scholar and earning her hat.

As the final year progressed, and the princess was close to that hat, there were times when she wanted to give up and go back to her shoes and purses. In those times, she found ***Sarah Klein, Tara Campbell, Courtney Stillwell, Kathie Vickers***, and countless other colleagues and friends to rely on. When times got tough, these people were there to listen, write with, figure out page numbering, or just inquire how she was doing. When there were no classes to take, and frustrations were at an all-time high, these colleagues and friends were there with a cheer to get her through the final leg of her journey. And her mom, ***Lynn,*** was always ready with a meal, a prayer, and Yoda to give her the strength to get through the countless hours of revisions.

Finally, when the princess returned to her castle at the end of each day, there was her knight in shining armor, and their children giving her hell to get the hat. They never gave up on her. They let her

travel the country as needed. They believed in her when she didn't believe in herself. They loved her unconditionally and still do.

Andy, Sidney, Andrew, and ***Sam*** this hat is as much yours as it is mine.

I share it with each of you, my fairy godmother, ***Dr. Zoss***,

and all the students who came before me and will come after me in search of their own hats.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A Nation at Risk	(*ANAR*)
Adequate Yearly Progress	(AYP)
Common Core State Standards	(CCSS)
No Child left Behind	(NCLB)
Smalltown High School	(SHS)

CHAPTER 1

PREFACE

> Because teachers retained a fair degree of autonomy once the classroom door was closed, they could, if they chose, comply only symbolically or fitfully or not at all with the mandates for change pressed on them by platoons of outside reformers. Or teachers could respond to reforms by hybridizing them, blending the old and the new by selecting those parts that made their job more efficient or satisfying. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 9)

Tyack and Cuban (1995) illustrated that once the classroom door was shut, teachers could comply as little or as much as they wished with educational reforms. Accordingly, little was known about how teachers respond to reforms: do they blend them into their current teaching practices, do they fully adopt them, or do they ignore them all together? Luke and Woods (2009) expressed similar sentiment stating, "large-scale state-based policy initiatives themselves do not determine classroom practice" (p. 199). While they pointed out that policy influenced what occurs in the curriculum, Luke and Woods did not claim to know just how much or how little the influence is when it comes to what occurs in the classroom. Like Tyack and Cuban (1995), they also posited that a change in policy does not mean a change in classroom practices. Smagorinsky, Lakly, and Johnson (2002) noted that teachers provided "lip-service" (p. 207) to include the standards-based curriculum in their classrooms but taught in as they choose when the classroom door was shut. My study was an examination of the phenomenon these scholars are describing: what happened behind closed doors when educational policies shifted and changed? I investigated the experiences of three veteran English teachers, at the same high school, with three educational reforms and found that veteran teachers who believed their practices were already in line with the reform made few changes to their curriculum.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to learn how three educational reforms reached three English classrooms at Smalltown High School (SHS, a pseudonym, as are all names in this study), a school that has been a part of a community in Fletcher County since 1916. I selected particular English teachers to participate in the study because the moment each began her teaching career was prior to a major reform in education. Ms. Jay taught for over 50 years in the same classroom and continues to teach in 2014. She taught before and after three major reforms: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and student desegregation (Hutcheson, 2012), the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) leading to the implementation of standards-based education (Au, 2010; Clarke, Shore, Rhoades, Abrams, Miao, & Li, 2003; Cuban, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Ravitch, 2010; Shanahan, 1991), and the No Child Left Behind legislation that ushered in an era of accountability in schools passed in 2002. Ms. Cardinal had been teaching alongside Ms. Jay for over three decades. She became an educator nearly twenty years after student desegregation occurred and taught through the implementation of state standards called for in *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983), and the implementation of NCLB (2002). Ms. Robbins started teaching at SHS in 1991, thirty years after Ms. Jay began her career. She added her experiences to the narratives about No Child Left Behind and standardized testing. This study shares their experiences with three educational reforms, and the extent to which the reforms affected their daily teaching practices.

Research Questions

From the understanding that there is much to learn from the personal narratives of teachers talking about their experiences, I posed the following research questions:

1. How have English teachers experienced mandated reforms such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) for student desegregation (Hutcheson, 2012), state standards that follow the publishing of *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983), and standardized testing and accountability resulting from No Child Left Behind (2002)?
2. What do narratives reveal about what occurred in their classrooms in response to these three reforms?

Defining Narrative

The origin of the word *narrative* is Latin from the late 1500s in Middle England. It means "telling a story" from the verb, *narrate*. Thinking about how to define narrative for the purpose of study was problematic for me. According to Carter (1993), "Anyone with even a passing familiarity with the literatures on story soon realized, however, that these are quite turbulent intellectual waters and quickly abandons the expectation of safe passage toward the resolutions" (p. 5). I was that person wading, sometimes drowning, in the sea of academic jargon when looking for a definition accessible to all types of readers (academics, teachers, policy makers) and that fits the needs of this study. Much has been written to define narrative and its importance in research. Several scholars led me to my understanding of narrative.

My definition of *narrative* had two components: a sequence of events and personal biographies, that, when brought together create the telling of a story. In this dissertation I tell the story of three teachers working through three educational reforms. The first component of narrative was a sequence of events that include a situation, action, and outcome (Herman and Vervaeck, 2005; Prince, 1987). Furthermore, in order to be a narrative, the events in the sequence were connected in some way (Herman and Vervaeck, 2005). The situation in this study was the presence of educational reforms in the experiences of high school teachers, the

actions they took in relation or resistance to those reforms (Cuban & Tyack, 1995), and the outcomes they discussed in reflection to these reforms as they told stories about their experiences. The narrative of this dissertation, then, served as a way to open the classroom doors of these teachers and shared the stories of what happened as they taught through decades of reforms. Herman and Vervaeck (2005) stated that a narrative was a sequence of events that were connected to one another through temporal or casual events, while Prince (1987) argued that a sequence of events consisted of an initial situation, an action or event, and an outcome. Both scholars agreed that the unfolding of events over time is a key component to defining a narrative. Missing from this event-focused version of narrative were characters/participants. In order to have an action or event, there must be an *actor* performing the action. Who was involved in those events in order for them to be connected? For the answer to this question of where were the people involved in the events of the narrative, I turned to Labov's (1997) explanation of narrative.

The second component of narrative centered on the teachers' biographies of their experiences with educational reforms (Labov, 1997). By including the teachers' personal stories, I added the element of character, of real people involved in these educational reform events to my definition of narrative. Labov defined the narrative of personal experience as a "report of a sequence of events that have entered into the biography of the speaker" (p. 2). Biography in this sense was essential to understanding the participants' experiences because their personal history was inextricably linked to the way they experienced reforms. To understand the role of educational reforms in their teaching lives, I had to understand from where they were coming. Labov also "distinguishes narrative from simple recounting of observations" (p. 3). He pointed out that a narrative is not just a retelling of what a person sees, but what a person has lived. I

included the teachers' biographies to assist the reader with background information of each teacher because these biographies are interlinked with their experiences with educational reforms.

Narrative was a beneficial and valuable research tool because it gave me an opportunity to "understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). As teachers shared their stories, I learned how they constructed their worlds and what values they placed on their experiences with educational reforms. Not only were narratives how people gave meaning to their lives, but they are also how teachers educate (Hankins, 2003). For the purposes of this study, I used narratives to explain "how humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). By providing a place for teachers to educate others with their narratives, I also gave them the opportunity to share how they experienced the reforms in their classroom.

Narrative Theory

In American culture, human lives are surrounded by and defined by stories. People living in the U.S. watch TV, go to the movies, read stories, and attend the theater (Merriam, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1991). When interacting with others, people listen to stories from friends and acquaintances, and they tell stories to explain or share their adventures. When explaining, communicating, or sharing it is human nature to tell stories. Polkinghorne (1991) maintained that "narrative is used to give form and meaning to our lives as a whole" (p. 143). The value of narratives in the lives of humans is thus immeasurable.

Because people engage in stories to communicate, narrative is an invaluable tool in understanding human experiences. "Storytelling and story comprehension are ultimately grounded in the general human capacity to conceptualize—that is, to structure experiential

elements into wholes" (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 142). Humans understand experiences through stories. Stories help to put all the pieces of an experience together into a whole. Because stories play such a valuable role in American society, it makes sense to use narratives in research, both as a method and as a way to share findings. Narrative theory is thus a key piece of my theoretical framework because "we tell stories. That is stories have particular features. Stories instruct, they reveal, they inform in special ways" (Eisner, 1997, p.5). Stories are a valuable tool used as people relate to one another and share experiences. Narratives are important for my study because they helped me, the researcher, to inform the reader about the specific experiences of these teachers with reforms.

Bruner (1996) designed a theory of narrative that focused on the construction of reality. This construction included three strategies to adopt when understanding narrative theory: contrast, confrontation, and metacognition. When contrasting narrative realities, people listen to stories of the same event and attempt to figure out how one can inform another so that all can fully understand the event. By including the experiences of three teachers with NCLB, my aim was to compare and contrast their stories in order to have a better understanding of how a particular educational reform affected their teaching practices. Confrontation occurs when the narrator's version of reality conflicts with the claims of another's version. Educators are told about educational reforms and sometimes are even told how these reforms should look in the classroom, but some questions remain: What is the reality of how the reforms affect classroom practices? Do the ideals of each reform, as written, conflict with the reality of what is taking place in the classroom? This study offers insights to begin answering these questions, while discovering several more questions.

Finally, Bruner included metacognition in his approach to narrative theory. Metacognition is commonly defined as thinking about thinking, or awareness (Fogarty, 1994). In this study, I provided teachers with several opportunities to reflect on their experiences with educational reforms, individually and as a group. Teachers talked in the interviews about their teaching practices and potentially became more aware of how their stories unfolded in relation to the educational reform events and to one another as faculty. Metacognition also played an important role in this study because the teachers' experiences were different from each other. While one teacher may have accepted a reform with ease, another may have ignored it with anger and bitterness. By allowing them to discuss their experiences with one another and with me, as a researcher, all parties involved were potentially afforded ways to develop mutual understandings about one another's experiences with reforms.

Narrative Inquiry

People think in narratives. Humans use narratives for several different purposes in life: to "give meaning to temporal events" (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 138), to share experiences (Kramp, 2004; Kramp & Humphreys, 1993), and to reflect and make sense of those experiences (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). Storytelling has become a valuable tool in Western culture. Using narratives in research recognizes their value and provides a space where participants can share, reflect, and make sense of their experiences.

Narratives have been a growing method of qualitative research since the 1990s (Merriam, 2009). Augustine and Zoss (2006), for example, not only used narratives to "elucidate the theory of aesthetic flow experience" (p. 80) but also included a story in their introduction of how their study began. These authors included the term *stories* in one of their section headings: "Stories of Aesthetic Flow Experiences" (p. 82). By including the narratives of the participants and stories

from the authors, readers have a better understanding of the aesthetic flow experiences of the pre-service English teachers in the study. Similar to Augustine and Zoss's use of stories, I relied on narratives because I wanted to have a better understanding of teachers' experiences with educational reforms.

I designed this study with a future goal of sharing the research with others, and I am committed to creating a compelling narrative of teachers' experiences. I relied on qualitative methodology, namely narrative, as my main method of data collection, analysis, and reporting because teachers' stories were not being told enough. Narratives are important because the person who had the experiences constructs the stories (Grbich, 2013). In this study the interviews were the opportunities for the teachers to construct their stories. This dissertation is my construction of the stories they told me. Finally, because of the value of narratives in Western culture (Polkinghorne, 1991), as well as in the culture of English teachers (Hankins, 2003), using narratives as data has the potential to entertain, inform, and educate readers about how teachers experienced educational reforms.

Dramatic Author

Booth (1961) wrote that narrative text is a way of communicating that includes a sender, a message, and a receiver. In his book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, he explained the three different roles that the author/narrator can play in a narrative: implied author, the dramatic narrator, and the dramatic author. The implied author plays no role in the text, other than the writing of it. He/she has control over word choice, mood, the character, and the story but is not seen in the narrative. The story guides itself: The reader does not need any assistance from the author to read the story. The dramatic narrator is a character in the story. If I were a participant in this study, I could act as the dramatized narrator; my role would be a character in the story of

teachers and reforms. The dramatic author plays a role in the narrative by using the term *I*. This author is not a character in the narrative, but acts as the narrator through use of first person. For the purposes of this narrative study, I take on the role of the dramatic author. Using this role, I interject myself into the narration to guide the reader through the story, but I do not act as a character. As the dramatic author, I chose which stories to share, the order of those stories, and whether the story is paraphrased or told first-person from the point of view of the participant.

About the Author

In my 14 years in the classroom, I did not pay close attention to reforms. I knew just enough to use the right vocabulary when speaking to the administration and included occasional lessons that assisted my students on standardized tests. Other than hearing administrators talk about testing in faculty meetings and going to English meetings to review curriculum and data, I knew little about the intricacies of the No Child Left Behind (2002) legislation. Because I was teaching in Texas (the state that seemingly led the push for standardized testing), my curriculum was the model for the legislative details in NLCB, including focusing on standardized tests, accountability measures based on resulting test scores, and the subsequent ranking of schools. For my experiences, the focus was on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The lead English teacher at my school fell in line with most teachers in thinking that preparing students for the test meant lots of practice with test-like questions (Herman, 2004). She was constantly reminding me that my "love and fluff" units were unnecessary and took up too much time and that I needed to allow more time for teaching open-ended questions (a major component to TAKS) and designing unit tests to look similar to the state tests including reading passages and multiple-choice questions.

When President George W. Bush, former governor of Texas, signed NCLB (2002) into place, my teaching practices did not alter from my previous practices. I still used my "love and fluff" assignments, but I also learned to create tests that looked similar to the state tests. I was able to use the correct discourse with my peers and administrators as if I were fully knowledgeable about NCLB and TAKS, while I continued to teach what I wanted in my classroom. My limited understanding of NCLB was that students' learning would be measured by standardized tests and that all students had to be reading on grade level or they risked not being promoted to the next grade. I whined about standardized tests as loudly as the next teacher and complained about the unfairness that a test determined whether a high school student graduated or not, but my knowledge of the NCLB's 780 pages ended there.

My passion for education led me to a large, urban research institution to pursue a graduate degree. Educational reforms were not an original focal point of my interests, but they quickly found their way into my discourse. As I began studying the history of education, I became more thoughtful about educational policy and how it affects students and teachers. Through many conversations and readings in graduate classes, I learned that there was little being written about how these policies were practiced in classrooms (Luke & Woods, 2009; Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Policy writers assumed that because the stakes were high for students and, therefore, their teachers, teachers would work harder to ensure that their students were prepared for the final tests. I found countless studies about teachers' reactions to tests and endless studies that looked at data from standardized tests, but I found very little research that asked the teachers about their experiences and classroom practices with educational reforms. When Rousmaniere (1997) wrote, "My dissatisfaction with the way in which the history of teachers has been written or, more often than not, left unwritten,"

I felt as if I found a friend. Her dissatisfaction spoke volumes to me and helped to motivate my passion for sharing teachers' narratives. Where are teacher narratives historically and currently? I regularly asked my colleagues and professors, if so much value is placed on educational reforms, then why are people not looking into the classrooms to see how the reforms were being put into practice? If they were practiced at all? They did not have the answers and encouraged me to investigate for myself.

In this study, I wanted to learn how reforms affected classroom practices from the teacher's point of view because I value and honor teachers and their stories. I wondered how much teachers actually knew about the reforms that were handed down from state and federal organizations. Were their experiences similar to mine? I knew just enough to have a conversation about the reforms, do what I was told to do, while still using my own methods. Or were teachers more knowledgeable about the reforms than I was? Had they altered their practices in regard to the reforms? I had many questions for teachers when it came to state and federal policy. How did teachers learn about educational reforms? How did policy drive or not drive daily classroom curriculum? This study opened the door of three classrooms to find out the stories of what happened when teachers experienced educational reforms.

Traditional dissertations follow a certain sequence: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and implications. Because accessibility and narrative are important to me for this study, I constructed my dissertation to look and read like a narrative, a practice that Polkinghorne (1991) argued is essential to life in Western cultures. Carter (1993) took the stance that authors can select, arrange, and employ "incidents and details…that exist in a culture" (p. 6) in order to tell the stories they want to tell. The work of Carter and Polkinghorne

(1991) allowed me to embrace my role as an author who is both storyteller and scholar to arrange the chapters in this dissertation using a narrative framework.

The opening chapter in my study, traditionally called the introduction, presents new material but I prefer to entitle Chapter 1 as the preface because I am using narrative to present this study; traditionally narratives open with a preface and not an introduction. This preface includes research questions, definitions of narrative, and a thorough explanation of narrative theory and narrative inquiry as I used these concepts in the study. I conclude with a discussion of Booth's (1961) roles of narrators and identify my role as narrator, teacher, and scholar.

In Chapter 2 I focus on the culture of the participating teachers. I start with creating the setting of the study in order to further the flow of the narrative, while the second chapter of a dissertation is typically a literature review. In this chapter I introduce the culture of the teachers, the setting of the school and surrounding community, and then provide a history of how English became a subject. By focusing on the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which the teachers do their jobs, I set the stage for telling the stories of the teachers' experiences. I frame the study theoretically in concepts of culture, experience, and idiocultures. My review of empirical studies and literature related to teachers and educational reforms, then, is located in the chapter in which I provide an overview of each reform.

In Chapter 3 I explain my methods in a manner that is similar to a traditional methods chapter. I present how I conducted this study and how I prepared this narrative by including the components typically found in a methods chapter: subjectivities and responsibilities, data collection, data analysis, representation of findings, trustworthiness, and limitation.

In Chapter 4 I weave my findings with previously conducted research to show the reader how my teachers' experiences fit in with what other scholars found while studying educational

reforms. I provide a rich description of each educational reform: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the desegregation of students (Hutcheson, 2012), *A Nation at Risk* (NCES, 1983) and the implementation of state standards, and No Child Left Behind (2002) and the institution of accountability based on standardized testing. Combining prior research with my data analysis allowed me to best share the personal stories of teachers' experiences within the gaps that currently exist in the literature about educational reform. Likewise, the detailed narratives in this chapter provide further insights into the culture in which the teachers teach and the extent to which that culture supported their experiences with these three reforms.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, is similar to that of a resolution to a narrative. In this chapter I explicate why this study is valuable. This dissertation opens the door to the experiences of teachers in one high school in the South. The stories of these teachers matter because they show what happens when educational reforms arrive in schools and how teachers deal with the everyday expectations of bringing those reforms to life or not. By treating the end as a resolution that typically concludes a story, I continue the use of narrative to discuss the implications of my study. Included in these implications, I discuss the culture of standards these teachers established, the cultural differences among the teachers and their students over time, and what new teachers can learn from three veteran teachers working in a school culture with high expectations for themselves and students and strong professional identities.

I end this dissertation with an Afterward. Because I began this study prior to the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) across the nation, I was unable to include it as one of the reforms in this dissertation. However, during the year of data collection, the state where this study takes place made major changes to its standardized tests to align with the CCSS. The administrators of Fletcher County, where the school is located, also made several

changes to the English curriculum, requirements for grade books, and created new common assessments to be used by all English teachers in all of the county schools. All of these implementations played a major role in the practices of the teachers. I include the Afterward to share the story of one teacher who continued to share with me, even after the interviews ended and the dissertation writing began. Her initial experiences with CCSS merited discussion because educational reforms continued to occur while this study was in progress.

CHAPTER 2

> The best-kept secret in English education is the daily genius in our classrooms that we sit on top of because we don't know that it's there. It's powerful inside the doors. It's revolutionary when it's shared. (Morrell, 2014)

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

Using purposive selection (Polkinghorne, 2005), I chose three white middle class female English teachers who worked in the same school as I to participate in this study. The teachers were selected because the time they began their teaching careers was closely aligned with the implementation of an educational reform. I also selected these three participants because they exemplified the typical teachers found in classrooms because their race, gender, and socioeconomic demographics match those most commonly found in public schools: white, female, middle class (NCES, 2010). All three teachers have had over twenty years of teaching experience that would enable them to be considered experts in their field. Carter (1993) wrote, "Expert teachers have a rich store of situated or storied knowledge of curriculum content, classroom social processes, academic tasks, and students' understandings and intentions" (p. 7). Collectively their expert storied knowledge provided insights into how teachers with more than 50, 30, and 20 years of teaching experienced educational reforms behind the closed doors of their classrooms.

I open this chapter with an explanation of experience and culture, because both concepts theoretically frame this study. By understanding the theories that framed this study, I provide the reader with a foundation for why I detail biographies of the teachers (Labov, 1997) and history of the high school setting, and then provide a history of English as a subject. Providing the histories of teachers, setting, and English as a subject was important to understand the

experiences of teachers within a specific cultural and historical context (Bruner, 1987; Cole, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

Experience

John Dewey (1916/1998) wrote extensively about different types of experiences as well as about the importance of recognizing experience as a foundation for learning. He believed that "Experience is primarily a process of undergoing; a process of standing something; of suffering and passion, of affection, in the literal sense of these words" (p. 49). I understood experience as the undergoing or observing of something. Everything humans do or see adds to their experiences. Dewey and Clandinin and Connelly (1989) posited that life and experience were intertwined: "One who studies experiences is studying life" (p. 4). To be able to retell the narratives of the teachers, my understanding of Dewey's explanation of experiences was imperative.

Experiences outside of and prior to formal education play significant roles in the lives of children when it comes to learning. Dewey (1902/1976) recognized that the "child lives in a somewhat narrow world of personal contacts" (p. 340) prior to entering school. Before a child enters the classroom, he/she is limited to his/her own experiences. Their experiences are narrow because they are limited to personal encounters. However, once the child enters school, the world becomes limitless. There are more experiences taking place than the child may be capable of understanding. The student is faced with facts, figures, solar systems, geography, etc., that may go beyond personal experiences (Dewey). Similar occurrences may happen to teachers. A new teacher may be introduced to educational reforms that are beyond his/her prior experiences. The new teacher may be frustrated because he/she may not understand the reforms and how they

as supposed to affect classroom practices. A veteran teacher, one who has experienced several rounds of reforms, may have an easier time incorporating the changes because of prior experiences with educational reforms.

Culture

Dewey (1938/1997) and sociocultural researchers (Smagorinsky, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) understood that experiences do not just happen and continue to happen in isolation. Experiences are tangled up with the culture of the one who is doing the experiencing. Because culture has such a formative role in individual lives and in education, I included it in my theoretical framework. "Education does not stand-alone…it exists in a culture" (Bruner, 1987, p. 28). The lives of teachers are surrounded by experiences. Humans' lives are surrounded and constructed by the cultures to which they belong.

I drew from several definitions of *culture* to develop this study. Culture was an important concept because in order to understand what educational reforms meant to three teachers, it was important to have a grasp on the context, the culture, of their classroom lives, the school, and the surrounding community. I explain culture using the terms that Cole (1996), Smagorinsky (2001), and Bruner (1996) employed in their work that explored the role of culture in educational settings.

People within a culture have shared experiences, shared artifacts, and shared histories, within which people created values and goals for functioning within that culture (Cole, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2001). Within the culture, people make meaning independently and together with others (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2001). Cultures, and the affordances and constraints of those cultures (Eisner, 2002), make certain meanings possible and others not (Smagorinsky, 2001).

Cole (1996) posited that culture is made up of people using artifacts to mediate their activity, some of which is joint activity with others. Included in this culture, Cole argued that history is also a key component of how people understand what to do with artifacts in activities. One example illustrated Cole's perspective on culture: The Fifth Dimension Project, an after-school activity that was housed in different locations for kids from a variety of neighborhoods. This project utilized small working groups of kids moving from one activity to another at locations that included a library and a recreation center. When observing The Fifth Dimension Project in action, observers saw activities that included a teacher role-playing as a wizard with a small group of children, while in another part of the room kids worked on making paintings, and in yet another corner, children played video games. To an outsider or first-time observer, it may have looked like total chaos. Why was there a costumed person in the middle of one group, students are drawing in another, and yet another group playing video games? But when one understands the history and the expected activities of this after-school center, the continuous activities with multiple different artifacts being used toward a variety of student-determined goals can begin to make sense. The Fifth Dimension Project looked different at the library than it did at the recreation center. The children in the library setting tended to arrive en masse and were rather quiet and moved from activity to activity with a sense of calmness. In contrast, the scene at the recreation center was much louder and hurried pace, with many more children coming and going than could be seen at the library.

Cole (1996) contributed to my use of culture by showing the importance of artifacts in joint activity, something that I could relate to as a teacher of English who used textbooks and literature to teach the subject. Also, Cole's example explained the value of knowing the history of an activity and the place where the activity occurs: In order to understand that the Fifth

Dimension Project was not simply controlled chaos, I had to understand the activities involved, the people doing the activities, and why they were there in the first place. Moreover, the settings in which this project played out set up a different way of being, moving, and acting in the project. At the library, the kids were calm, while at the recreation center, the kids were excited and moved around a lot. In my study, it was important to have Cole as a lens for understanding the specific history of the teachers in a particular school located in the South for over 50 years' time. Their joint activity with students and each other as colleagues and teachers in the school are part of the culture in which they are members. This culture is then situated within a specific time and place, both important factors that Cole illustrated.

Smagorinsky's (2001) work built on the sociocultural foundation of Cole (1996) and others (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991), and extended the definition of culture to include "the recurring social practices and their artifacts that give order, purpose, and continuity to social life" (p. 139). Smagorinsky argued that tools or artifacts provide an essential part of an individual because those tools are part of the culture. Specifically, tools (artifacts) both hold the meaning of a culture and serve as a means for a person to change the culture. In Smagorinsky's definition, culture is not unchangeable, it is something that works on people and can also be worked on by people. Furthermore, Smagorinsky examined the role of meaning making within culture. What something means depends on the setting, the tools, and the activity. He further pointed out that people do things toward meeting some goal. Schools present settings in which students and teachers use shared tools, like literature textbooks, but they may use those textbooks for different purposes or goals. Another example that Smagorinsky used was: A student not from a middle-class culture may not have the necessary tools to have the same goals for learning as her middle class teacher expects. What is valued in the school setting, then, depends on the culture of the

school, which includes the place where the school is located, who is attending and teaching at the school, what the expectations for goals are among those people, and the history of the people and the activities in the school. With Smagorinsky's definition, then, I focused on the tools, the values, and the goals that were present for the teachers as they experienced educational reforms over many years.

While Cole (1996) and Smagorinsky (2001) focused on shared experiences and culture, Bruner (1987) provided a lens for understanding culture in regards to the individual and the expression of narratives by an individual. Bruner highlighted the individual's meaning making process: "individual expression inheres in meaning making, assigning meanings to things in different settings on particular occasions" (p. 3). In other words, meaning making within a particular moment in time and location is an individual expression of culture. "It is culture that provides the tools for organizing and understanding our worlds in communicable ways" (Bruner, 1987, p. 3). I wanted to understand how three teachers individually understood and experienced educational reforms. My goal was to learn about how the each individual teacher expressed what it meant to have educational reforms in her professional experiences. What did each teacher value? What were her goals for attending to the reforms or choosing not to attend to them? What did the reforms mean to each of them as a person? When they communicated their experiences with me, another white, middle class female English teacher, I developed understandings about our shared culture as white English educators at the same school, and about their individual experiences that were expressed in the interviews. Here again, their personal stories were important for understanding their experiences, as were the culture and history of the high school and surrounding community.

Idioculture

English teachers belong to a content specific culture that is different from other content area teachers. Teaching English involves teaching meaning (Kress, et al., 2005). In other disciplines, there are concrete, specific standards to be taught, for example, a chemistry class, it is the norm that students memorize the Periodic Table: in civics class, students are required to know the fifty states and their capitals. But in English, because meaning making is the central idea, the content or tools used to teach the meaning is less specific. Kress, et al. (2005) used the word "character" as an example. English teachers may be required to teach "character." How the teacher teaches that term, which text is used to teach that word, and which definition of the word character (a person in a story, or how the person presents himself or herself) is taught are up to the individual English teacher. Unlike the specification of the periodic table or the fifty states, English has more autonomy and choice in the curriculum. This is just one culture that these teachers belong to, another culture that has been narrowed to smaller group, called idiocultures.

These three English educators have been teaching together at the same school for over 20 years; therefore, they belong to the same idioculture of English teachers at SHS (Fine, 1979). An "idioculture is a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an interacting group to which members can refer and employ as the basis of further interaction" (p. 734). To further understand the nuances of idiocultures, Fine studied little league baseball teams. He found that each team developed its own idioculture as a result of "social and environmental contingencies, combined with the social definitions, which emerge in group interaction" (p. 736). Smagorinsky and O'Donnell-Allen (2000) also used idiocultures found in a literature class to study engagement and disengagement of students in small groups.

Smagorinsky (2001) further defined idioculture in the classroom as "cultures-within-cultures in which cultural practices, values, and goals differ in some degree from those that govern the culture as a whole" (p. 136). English teachers may have goals, values, and experiences that differ from teachers in other subjects, not only because they teach English, a content area that utilizes tools different to other contents, but also because they belong to an idioculture of English teachers (Kress et al, 2005; Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 2000). Idioculture, comprised of a shared community, school, and department, is important to recognize because the teachers' classroom practices, values, and goals are most likely shared. The teachers in this study each belong to the shared idiocultures of the English department.

Fine (1995) also understood that in idiocultures, stories are used to communicate with one another. "We narrate stories to help us process our experiences" (p. 134). Because of their shared idiocultures, the narratives that are told will be better understood with others who belong to the same idioculture (Fine). They may have similar plots, conflicts, and resolutions. I value this idioculture of English teachers because I am also a part of it. As an insider within this department, I believed that I understood their language and narratives better than if I were a researcher without this similar perspective. I included a group interview in this study to witness this idioculture as a researcher conducting a study and not just as a colleague and group member. I wanted to understand how they interacted with one another and how/if their narratives would change when they were together. In the next section, I introduce the teachers by sharing their histories of how they became English teachers, their first year in the classroom, and my personal reflections about each teacher as a peer.

Participants: The Teachers

In this section, I provide a brief biographical sketch about each participant to help paint the picture of those involved in this narrative. During the interviews, I asked questions to learn about their background and how they became teachers in order to better understand each teacher. In the second part of this section, I describe the setting of this study because it is important when understanding the culture of the school, community, and the teachers involved in this study. The final section of this chapter is a history of how English became a subject and how it has changed through major educational reforms that occurred prior to the 1950s. The history is here to provide a look at another culture that the teachers belong to, as well, as show the reader how past educational reforms affected how English became the course found on high school campuses in 2014.

Ms. Jay

Ms. Jay grew up in a southern state and received her bachelor's degree in English education from a state university in 1961. When she was in high school, her brother attended the elementary school across the street from her high school. This setting is important to note because when his first grade teacher had a meeting, or an errand to run, the teacher asked Ms. Jay to watch the class. While I thought this story was peculiar, Ms. Jay told it as a common occurrence. The small town she lived in was a community where everyone knew everyone and a high school student watching an elementary teacher's class for a short time was not the oddity that it might be considered currently. In Ms. Jay's experiences with watching her brother's first grade class, she became familiar with the expectations of teaching elementary school students.

When looking into career fields, Ms. Jay felt that there were only three professional choices in the early 1960s for women: a secretary, a nurse, or a teacher. "I didn't think I could

type well enough to be a secretary. And I figured I didn't really want to kill or hurt anybody if I were a nurse. So I decided that people would probably succeed in spite of me if I were a teacher." This quote shows a lot about the personality of Ms. Jay because it displays: her thoughtfulness, her sense of humor, and her understanding about students' ability to learn. She was a confident teacher but also believed that she may or may not be the best in spite of her 50 years in the classroom. Originally, she considered teaching elementary school because she had been "teaching" it to her brother's classes for several years, but she did not feel good about teaching those grade levels. She was concerned about teaching "all of that in one day, every day, to the same people." The idea of teaching all content areas to the same group of students all day did not appeal to her; therefore, she turned to teaching high school where she could teach different students the same content each day.

When she visited the college of her choice, she told the orientation guide that she wanted to be an art teacher. The guide told her that she would not be able to find a job in art, so she switched her teaching interest to English. She had always liked English and made good grades in English; hence, English became the obvious choice for her to teach.

In October of 1961, Bill Smith (superintendent of the Fletcher County School System) called the university where Ms. Jay attended, looking for an English teacher to start as soon as possible. The lady working in the placement office was a neighbor of Ms. Jay and knew that she was at the end of her program. When she heard that Mr. Smith was looking for an English teacher, she immediately thought of Ms. Jay and set up an interview.

On December 7^{th,} 2014, Ms. Jay will have taught for 53 years, 50 of them in Room 106. The teacher teaching prior to her in 1961 had suddenly married in the middle of the fall semester and left, and the school needed a replacement immediately. Wives of local businessmen had

been substituting in the missing teacher's classes until the holidays. During the late November and December holiday season, they had to leave school to prepare their homes for parties and entertaining. It was then that Ms. Jay began her teaching career at Smalltown High School.

She remembered her first weeks in the classroom as filled with a bit of anxiety. "I lost so much weight that I could turn my skirt all the way around without unzipping it." She told this story with a laugh, but made sure that I understood that it was not the students who caused her weight loss. They were very well disciplined, even though they had seen several substitutes come and go. Ms. Jay could not remember any classroom management issues or difficulty fitting in with the new staff. The anxiety could be attributed to the beginning a new profession, being so multiple states away from home, and starting in the middle of an established classroom culture.

In the early 1960s, there were three high schools in Fletcher County: Smalltown High (the white city school), North High School (the African-American high school), and Knox High School (the white county high school for rural students). The city school was located inside the city, while the county school was located in a rural, farmland area of the county. It was understood that white, rich, city kids attended Smalltown High, where white farm boys/girls attended the county school. Ms. Jay was told during her first week of school that Smalltown had the highest income per capita of any town in the United States. She remembered that the wealth of the students did not affect their attitudes toward education, not that she was expecting this to be the case. She was unsure of what to expect, as this was her first teaching experience. "They [the students] were respectful. They came into the classroom and they behaved." Students who attended the city school were expected to go to college then return to Smalltown to raise families and/or continue in the family business.

Ms. Jay was the lead English teacher in her department during the year of the study. She taught all advanced and gifted classes. She has been the yearbook sponsor for decades. Not only has she taught grandparents in Smalltown, she taught principals, teachers, aunts, uncles, moms, dads, brothers, sisters, and cousins. Her class has become a rite of passage for those born and raised in Smalltown. Recently the state proclaimed a day of recognition in honor of Ms. Jay's tenure in the classroom.

Our interviews always took place in her classroom. Walking into her room, I noticed the traditional desks from the 1970s. Chairs connected to an actual desk, with tops that open up to hold books, pencils, etc. Although the desks are not used to hold items, the countless students she taught in the past 50 years would likely recognize the metal chair with wooden desktop that they occupied in earlier years. Ms. Jay kept everything: along the back wall bookshelves housed textbooks and dictionaries that date as far back as the 1960s. Boxes lined the sides of walls full of mimeographed copies from various units, lessons, and authors. When asked by another teacher if she had materials about literature or an author that teacher was considering adding to her curriculum, Ms. Jay went directly to the right box and pulled out worksheets, articles, comics, or biographies to help the teacher. Her wealth of materials was known throughout the English department. When people come to look at SHS or tour the school, Room 106 (Ms. Jay's room) was usually a stop when sharing the history and richness of Smalltown High School.

Since my first day at SHS, Ms. Jay and I developed a close relationship. She often left articles that she knew I would be interested in or small gifts in my box to let me know that she was thinking about me. We ate together in the faculty lounge and shared stories of our personal lives. When I decided to go to graduate school, not only did she write one of my recommendations, but her encouraging words also helped me get through the application and

interview process. She taught American Literature to two of my children. She was a rarity in the state this study takes place because of her years of experience in the same classroom, and I value all that she had to offer me as a colleague and as a scholar.

Ms. Cardinal

Born and raised in Smalltown, Ms. Cardinal knew she wanted to be a teacher from a young age.

> I loved school. I always loved school. And it was funny, when I was in elementary school; I always wanted to teach the grade. Like when I was in second grade, I wanted to teach second grade. When I was in fifth grade, I wanted to teach fifth grade. It just kept going. And I loved school. I loved the atmosphere of school.

Thirty years later, one can still find Ms. Cardinal loving school. In her 30 plus years of teaching at SHS, she has taught advanced, regular, and collaborative special education English classes to tenth and eleventh grade students.

Ms. Cardinal attended Smalltown High School and had Ms. Jay as a homeroom teacher. She left Smalltown to attend a large state university and, as expected from the families of Smalltown, returned to teach and spend the rest of her career in her hometown. Like Ms. Jay, she attended college to be a teacher, but not originally in English. She wanted to teach French. After taking a few classes, she realized that French was not her "forte," so she moved to English. She graduated in the spring of 1981 with a bachelor of science in English education, and got a job the following fall semester at SHS. She earned her masters of education by taking courses during the summer months at the same college where she received her undergraduate degree.

She always knew that she wanted to come back to Smalltown to teach. "I still had a lot of friends here, and I wanted to return." At the time, in the early 1980s, Smalltown High School had two campuses about five minutes driving distance away from each other: one for ninth and tenth graders, and the other for eleventh and twelfth grade.

> At first, when I was hired by the county, they told me I was going to be working at the campus, which held the ninth and tenth grades. And I was all excited. I thought that was going to be fun. And then, Mr. Court, who was the principal, called and told me I was going to be teaching at the other campus. And I thought, oh, I don't know if I am excited about that. I was thinking to myself because SHS was eleventh and twelfth grade and I was what, 20?

Her anxiety was not only about her age and working with high school students only a few years younger, but also with working at SHS. She had just graduated from SHS four years earlier. Not only would she have the expected first year of teaching nerves, but also to have to teach next to teachers who taught her just a few years previously was very worrisome to her. In spite of her high levels of anxiety that first year, she remembered the faculty, and staff, being very warm and welcoming. They treated her as a peer and teacher and not as a student, as she might have expected.

Prior to this study, I did not know Ms. Cardinal very well. While we taught the same subject for several years, our conversations were polite faculty lounge conversations about grading, curriculum, and/or the weather. We worked together for nearly nine years, and I knew very little about her. I was a bit nervous about what she would share because I only knew to her to be quiet and reserved. I was wrong in my assumptions. Once Ms. Cardinal started reflecting on her teaching career, I learned much about her love of teaching, SHS, and her community.

Our interviews always took place off campus at places of her choosing. Contrasting with earlier, brief conversational experiences with her, once she started talking about Smalltown and her experiences in education, she had much to offer and the conversation flowed more easily than I expected. During one of the interviews, I had a prior engagement and could only meet for an hour. I told her that the interview might only last about 45 minutes. For that particular interview, I brought the yearbook for the year she started teaching to help her remember the early years of teaching at SHS. She seemed to enjoy reflecting about her peers, events, and the club

she sponsored via the yearbook. Not only did she talk for nearly two hours (I missed the my meeting), she shared many stories of friends, SHS, and a principal who was her administrator for over 20 years. The narratives she shared with me about the culture of the school, and about the reforms she experienced both added a great deal to this study.

Ms. Robbins

With a mother who was an elementary teacher, Ms. Robbins grew up in an educator's home. She recalled with a hearty laugh that she did not want to be a teacher because she saw all that came with teaching (grading, planning, attending events) from her mother.

> I SWORE that I would never teach because my mother was an elementary school teacher. And I saw her on weekends grading papers and making out tests. And I said that I would never do that. So that is probably why I teach because I said I wouldn't.

She started her college career in paralegal studies but changed it to take classes that better interested her. By the end of her sophomore year, she realized how much she enjoyed literature classes and ended up in the field of education with an emphasis on literature. This experience was similar to both Ms. Jay who was thinking about being an art teacher, and Ms. Cardinal's, who was originally going to school to be a French teacher.

Ms. Robbins came from another state, like Ms. Jay, and made Smalltown her home. Receiving a bachelor's degree of English Education at a southern state university, Ms. Robbins moved to Smalltown because she got married and her spouse's family lived in a neighboring town. She started teaching middle school grades in her home state (for two years) in 1988 and moved to SHS in 1990. Her mother knew a principal in Fletcher County where SHS was located. Ms. Robbins used the principal, whom she had never met, as a reference. As Ms. Robbins shared this story, she laughed at the questionable integrity using a reference that she had

never met. Twenty-five years later, she still believes that one of the reasons she got an interview was because of this reference.

Teaching in another state did not fully prepare her for teaching at Smalltown High School. The original town she taught in was a small farming town. "Chicken farmers, good ole country boys, and the boys didn't misbehave or they would get their butt whipped at home." The school was very small, 350 kids on a K-12 campus. There was only one section of eight grade English; one of ninth grade English, one tenth, one eleventh, and one twelfth grade English class. When she made the transition to Smalltown High School, the school and the students were very different because of the culture, size, and demographics of her new home.

Like Ms. Jay, Ms. Robbins was hired to replace a teacher at Smalltown High School who left suddenly, with little notice. Unlike the teacher Ms. Jay replaced, the teacher left because the students ran her off.

> She was only here for a few weeks and couldn't handle it and literally got in her car and drove away. So for most or all of September and maybe the latter part of August, umm, the classes had had substitutes in and out.

Because of the original teacher's quick escape, and the coming and going of many substitute teachers, Ms. Robbins' transition to SHS was not as easy as the transition for Ms. Jay. The students had run off one teacher and then experienced several different substitute teachers in their room. It seemed as if the students had complete control of the classroom and not the adult who was in the room at the time. When Ms. Robbins started teaching the class, it was chaos. Unlike Ms. Jay's students who did not have discipline issues despite the students having several substitutes, the culture of the school had changed from all college bound students with wealthy parents in the early 1960s to an inclusion of students who lived in poverty and experienced low school performance in the early 1990s.

Ms. Robbins recalled those first days, “Fights would break out” and students were not interested in what she had to teach. She did not waver in her classroom management and took control of the students. Eventually, things settled down, the students realized that she was “not going anywhere.” She and the students formed a bond of mutual respect. And while the students were still struggling with the course, Ms. Robbins was able to get and maintain control of the classroom.

Ms. Robbins and I were close in age and our youngest children were in the same grade. All three of my children had her as an English teacher. She was well respected on campus and known for her excellent work ethic and high expectations for high school freshmen. When one of us had a bad day, we sought out the other for words of wisdom, humor, or just to vent. When I asked if she would be a part of my study, she worried that she would not have much to contribute. She was wrong: the narratives she shared with me were excellent additions to this study. One of my favorite lines of this study came from Ms. Robbins. When asked about what she knew about NCLB, she replied that she really did not pay attention to all that because it didn't have “any personal relevance to her.” I appreciated her frankness and willingness to tell me about what the reforms meant, even if that meant that she disagreed with the policy.

Group Interview

We met in my classroom at a rectangular table built for four people. Ms. Jay arrived in the room first and was the first to sit down. She sat at seat on one of longer sides of the table. Ms. Robbins arrived next taking a seat on the other side of the table, diagonal to Ms. Jay. I pulled up a chair and sat at the narrow end of the table—the other narrow end was against the wall. I sat in this place because I did not want to be thought of as a member of this conversation, but rather as the researcher conducting the interview, an outsider. Sitting at the head of the table

took me out of the square of English teachers and created a triangle of three English teachers with a researcher watching the conversation take place. Ms. Cardinal arrived last and took the seat on the same side as Ms. Jay, across from Ms. Robbins.

Where each person sat is important to understand the role each person played in the conversation. Ms. Jay was the dominant one, sitting closest to the head of the table without actually sitting at the head of the table. She was always the first to respond to my questions or to begin telling a story. Ms. Robbins, sitting alone on the opposite side of the table, shared her frustrations with the reforms that were discussed. From my perspective at the head of the table, Ms. Cardinal sat behind Ms. Jay and did not speak very much, but she added to the conversation with nonverbal responses, including head nodding, head shaking, or laughter.

When the interview began, it was similar to a question and answer session, and not much conversation occurred. I asked a few questions, and generally Ms. Jay responded first with Ms. Robbins sharing her opinion as a follow up to what Ms. Jay said. After about 15 minutes, a conversation started, and the ensuing discussion required little guidance from me. The stories Ms. Jay shared and her replies to questions were frequently positive. In contrast Ms. Robbins contributed her beliefs and experiences with the reality of reforms and shared a less than attractive picture of those reforms. Ms. Cardinal sat quietly, nodding or adding a yes or okay as she saw fit, but rarely offered her own stories.

Because I worked with all three of these women and had interviewed them multiple times prior to the group interview, I was not surprised by the emotions and stories shared by Ms. Jay and Ms. Robbins, but I was surprised by the quietness of Ms. Cardinal. In an attempt to pull her into the conversation verbally, I directed some questions to Ms. Cardinal, but she only answered the question, sat back, and continued to listen to what the others had to say. Ms. Jay, on the

other hand, shared some of the same stories that she shared during our individual interviews. And Ms. Robbins had moments when she was so excited or angered that her emotions appeared through laughter or beating her fist on the table. The group interview offered me a chance to learn more about their personalities as they interacted with one another. Furthermore, this interview gave me another avenue to better understand the role each teacher had in the shared departmental idioculture (Fine, 1979), while also gaining insights into their 20+ years of shared experiences with educational reforms.

The Setting: Smalltown High School

This study took place in a small town outside a large metropolitan area in the Southeast United States. Smalltown was founded in the early 1800s. Because Smalltown was known for being a hospital town during the Civil War, it was spared the destruction that was visited upon many other Southern cities. Many antebellum homes were still standing and lived in at the time of this study. This was a town where families do not leave. One can trace generations of families, living on the same plot of land for decades. The local jewelry store, Mexican restaurant, and flower shop were all owned by life-long and multi-generational members of the community. The original courthouse, built at the turn of the twentieth century, was recently renovated and was still used for county and city offices in 2014. If a stranger asked for directions, the BBQ restaurant that has been around for almost 100 years and the courthouse were always included as points of reference. Aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents have all graduated from the same local high school, Smalltown High. In the following section, I provide an overview of the school broken up into different decades. The decades are in correspondence to the dates of the three educational reforms that serve as the reforms for this study: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), A Nation at Risk (1983), and No Child Left Behind (2002).

The Early Years

Smalltown High School (SHS) was opened in 1916 and earned accreditation in 1919. Its first yearbook was published in the 1940s. A decade later, the school board passed a referendum to build a new high school because the original had become outdated and too small for the town's growing population. The new school, built in the 1950s, still housed many classrooms and administrative offices, while the current campus has grown up around the building built during the 1950s. The math (now English) building was added to the campus in the 1980s. A new gym was built in the 1990s, and the campus continued to grow and be remodeled in 2014. Much like the community in Smalltown, the teachers at Smalltown High do not leave. In 2014, the teachers had worked at SHS for an average of over nine years. During the year of the study, there were 24 teachers who graduated from SHS, representing over 20% of the teaching staff.

The 1960s

In the 1960s, there were three high schools in Fletcher County: Smalltown High School (the city school for white students), North High School (the city school for African American students), and a Knox High School (the country school for white students). Ms. Jay remembered that the students at SHS "were taught as if they were college bound. There was no leveling of classes. There was no advanced, general, basic, none of that. It was just an English class and everyone was in it." With this in mind, she began what became a career that spanned over 50 years in the same school, almost all of them in the same classroom. The end of the 1960s saw the SHS grow in population, but not in physical size. The 900 students spent their school hours in the main building that housed offices, classrooms, a library, and a small auditorium/film room. Until the late 1960s, SHS was an all-white school full of students whose mothers were mostly homemakers and fathers were primarily business owners, lawyers, doctors, accountants, or other

prominent men in the community. The more affluent African Americans also lived in the community, but were separated from the white families. Smalltown, the community, was known to have the highest income per capita in the United States in the early 1960s.

Under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the county started its Schools of Choice movement. This movement made it possible for students to attend the school of their choice, regardless of race or where the student was districted to attend school. There was a letter sent home to everyone in the county stating "A choice of school is required for each student. No principal, teacher, or other school official is permitted to influence anyone in making a choice" (p. 1). In the first year, three African-American students transferred to Smalltown High School. One of the students, a junior at the time of the transfer, remembered most of her experiences as positive ones and continued her senior year at SHS. It should be noted that no white students from Smalltown High transferred to North. The following year, several more African Americans transferred. There are no records to show exact numbers, but former students remember the number being around 20. These students became school leaders, played sports, and made good grades. One of these students was recognized nationally because of his ability to bring together two races in one school while serving as the Student Association president.

The 1970s

In 1970, Fletcher County put together a group of students and teachers, African American and white, to meet on a regular basis to help ensure that the process of integrating went as fluidly as possible. In the archival data, it was not clear if the students and teachers were selected or volunteered to join this group. They met after school to determine how they were going to work through the integration issues. This group met at a time when other schools in the South had already experienced white community outrage, protests, violence during the 1960s

when the first white schools began integrating the students (Dingus, 2006; Grant, 1988; Wilson & Segall, 2001). This group was formed to maintain peace when desegregation took place in Smalltown.

In 1971, North High School (NHS) and Smalltown High School merged into one school with two separate campuses: one building housing ninth and tenth graders (NHS) and the other serving eleventh and twelfth graders (SHS). With this integration of students (Hutcheson, 2012) came a new mascot, and new team colors, but not a new school name—the school retained the name of the white high school and added the name of the African-American school, becoming Smalltown North High School for a short time. Eventually the North disappeared. I am not sure when or why: none of the teachers could remember and the archives did not provide this information. Within two years of the sanctioned integration that took place in 1971, the number of African American students in the senior class grew to 106 students in a class of 379.

The 1980s

In the 1980s, the staff had grown and yet the teachers had a close-knit relationship. Ms. Cardinal recalled that the first principal she worked for in 1982 required the faculty to have a monthly dinner in the cafeteria. Everyone brought in a dish and enjoyed a meal together. "It was fun. It was nice to get to sit down and talk to people." Because of this and the welcoming atmosphere at SHS, Ms. Cardinal felt that the camaraderie was obvious. "There have been some [teachers] who have been there a long time who have become the backbone of the place. To me we have a lot of longevity at our school."

The 2000s

The following thirty years, with the growth of the school in population (student and teacher) and the campus (more buildings) saw a change in the close-knit atmosphere of the

community. No longer was the faculty lounge called the faculty lounge, it became the faculty workroom. Teachers did not all eat lunch together because there were so many lunches. The buildings that housed teacher classrooms were spread out and teachers were closest to those in their department or their building. While there was still a form of camaraderie between the faculty, the culture of the school had moved into a collection of idiocultures formed for some teachers because of the close proximity of their classroom locations and for others because of the shared experiences with teaching within a particular subject like English.

The school continued to play a large role in the town in 2014. On Friday nights, the football stands were full of not only students, faculty, and parents, but also of community members and alumni who have graduated from SHS or have young children who will attend SHS. During homecoming week, students painted business windows on the square, and the homecoming parade filled with floats from the high school and its five feeder schools traveled through the town to crowds sometimes two and three people deep. Pep rallies were held in the town's public park. SHS was not just a local high school, it was also a place where the community comes to play and support nearly everyone in town, especially the students. A former principal referred to the school as the living room of the community, "It is like the couch where everyone is invited in to have a seat."

Smalltown High School was a Title 1 school in the year of the study with 54% of its 2300 students receiving free or reduced lunch. The population was 64% white, 28% African American, 4% Hispanic, and students identifying with other cultures making up the final 4%. In 2011, the school had an 84% passing rate on the end-of-the-year standardized tests and a 94% passing rate on the writing test required to be passed for graduation. In 2013, *USA Today* ranked Smalltown High School in the top 8% of high schools in the state and in the top 8% of high

schools across the nation. Pride for Smalltown and Smalltown High School played a major role in teachers' and students' lives. The experiences of the teachers at SHS may be unlike those of other high schools because of the culture of the town and because of the value the community placed on this high school in particular. "Smalltown High School is the flagship of this community. The school binds the community together" (former superintendent).

The history of SHS and the idiocultures developed among the teachers provided a glimpse into the local context for the three teachers I studied. This local English culture, though, was part of a larger history of English teaching that is also important for understanding how the teachers came together as a community. In the following section, I explain how English has evolved into a subject to illustrate how current teaching methods in English came into being, and to evaluate current trends in English (Stahl & Hartman, 2011). The history of how English became a course and how reforms affected the teaching of English prior to the 1950s played an important role in understanding these English teachers' experiences after the 1950s.

History of English as a Subject

In this section, I provide a concise look at how English became a subject, and I highlight several educational reforms that have influenced how English as a course progressed in the past 100+ years. Applebee (1974) wrote a definitive history of English, and I draw this account based on his work. I include a brief history of the culture of teachers, specifically English teachers, and of the reforms that have contributed to the history of English as a subject. As the history of English continues to be written, the more research that includes teacher narratives, the clearer the history will be. Further, as I share the stories of teachers in this study related to student desegregation, implementation of state standards, and high-stakes testing, my study expands the

historical narrative of how English was taught in an all-white small southern school that eventually integrated students and became a Title 1 school.

The 1800s

In the early 1800s, secondary teachers used literature in the classroom primarily to teach good writing (Applebee, 1974). Literature was relied on as a model to show how authors used American grammar and punctuation, and students looked to the literature to learn how to write properly. Few traditions recognized literature as a tool to teach ethics, to assist in developing scholarly discipline, or to read for pleasure and enjoyment (Applebee, 1974). These traditions were not commonplace and the purpose for using literature in the classroom became the source of many arguments between teachers and scholars. "Horace Mann was typical of many influential educators when he argued that novels should not be taught because their appeal was to emotion rather than to reason" (p. 22). Francis Child, a Harvard professor and famed author in the 1850s, argued that philological studies of literature were important in American colleges, thus he established the first English college course. His student, Robert Grant, was the first American to receive his Ph.D. in English literature (Applebee, 1974). Johns Hopkins University, founded in 1876, was the first to create a teaching program to teach methods for the teaching of English. These two events, the first English course taught in a college and the establishment of an English education program, led to more conversations and actions across universities to institute literature classes for the traditional methods of teaching ethics and creating intellectuals through literature. As more colleges recognized the use of literature as a philological study, college entrance exams followed suit during the late 1800s.

Colleges wanted to test the understanding of their applicants to ensure scholarly knowledge of the titles each college listed on its composition exam (Applebee, 1974; Kliebard,

2004). Each college had its own list of readings to be examined in a composition written by the applicant. The essay was scored on spelling, punctuation, grammar, expression, and understanding of the literature referenced in the questions (Applebee, 1974). At this time, high schools were primarily used for college preparation because those who attended were primarily wealthy, college-bound students. Because of the importance of this entrance exam in composition, high schools needed to allow literature to be taught as a course to prepare students for the composition entrance exam. The reading lists needed to be thoroughly read by the students, not just for the grammar, but for the knowledge and storyline of each piece for the exams. It was in the late1800s that English as a course became recognized as a valuable addition to the course work of secondary students because of required collegiate exams.

Committee of Ten

In 1892, the Committee of Ten released a document curriculum at the national level, including a discussion of what the study of English was and requirements for students taking the course in high school. The National Educational Association put together The Committee of Ten, including representatives from schools and colleges, to respond to questions about the "differentiation of pupils, the content of a secondary programme, the educational values and correlation of studies, the true order of studies, the time-needs and limits of subjects, the training of teachers, and the supervision of schools" (Mackenzie, 1894, p. 146). A committee, created to study the purposes of English, found that there were two main objectives for teaching English: first, students should read literature to understand the thoughts of others and to give expression to their own thoughts; and second, students should read in order to enjoy good literature and to continue to read on their own. These findings aligned more with those who argued for the teaching English as its own subject area like mathematics and less with the use of teaching

English simply for the transfer of knowledge of grammar. The subcommittee on English also noted that English needed to be taught daily and to all students in every year of high school (grades 9 – 12). Applebee (1974) wrote, "English is the only subject recommended for definite inclusion in the program of study for every student during each of the four high school years" (p. 33). The Committee listed what should be taught each year, how much homework should be given, and how transitions to subsequent years, including the transition to college should be made. The report also addressed the college entrance examination for English, adding a singular entrance exam for the use of all colleges, rather than each college designing its own.

National Council of Teachers of English

The Committee of Ten brought some agreement to what should be included in teaching English, but English teachers still had problems with colleges requiring specific titles to be taught at the secondary level (Applebee, 1974). High school English teachers wanted the choice of titles to teach based on the make-up of their classes and their personal preferences. Secondary English teachers felt that the choices listed on the college exams were too narrow for the needs of their students, leading them to pull together and form the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1911 (NCTE, n.d.). The first meeting in 1910 sought to create unity among English teachers across the nation. At its first meeting in Boston, "a committee was selected to present before the College Entrance Examination Board the views of English teachers on college entrance requirements for their subject" (Radner, 1960, p. v). At the next meeting in San Francisco, a resolution was passed that NCTE would become a permanent representation body for teachers of English (Radner, 1960). Colleges heard the calls for change from NCTE and English teachers not belonging to NCTE, and in 1916, colleges altered their entrance exams to include two choices for students to respond to on the entrance exams (Applebee, 1974). The first

choice given to applicants was the traditional question that included a list of texts to respond to; the other question provided no lists, but allowed student choice in responding to a broad question using any text that the student had read as support for the student's essay (Applebee, 1974).

The Cardinal Principles Report

As English teachers became more organized and the number of high school students more than doubled in size between the years of 1905 and 1918 (Commission for Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918; Kliebard, 2004), the need for education was no longer just for college preparation (Applebee, 1974). The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education published its Cardinal Principles in 1918, understanding the main goal of education to be maintaining democracy. To meet this goal, all students needed to learn how to live as contributing members of society through seven objectives: health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home-membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character. The Commission published its recommendations for the inclusion of vocational curriculum. Through the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Education stating that "the conception of vocation as a means not only of earning a livelihood, but also serving society and of developing the personality of the worker" (p. 5) was one of the aims of the principles. Within this commission, committees were formed to design vocation-based curriculum. While the English committee "greatly shifted the goals and much of the presumed activity within the classroom, they did not shift the materials that were to be used in attaining those goals" (Applebee, 1974, p. 66). As a result, the classics remained on the high school reading lists, but teachers were encouraged to teach for intellectual abilities based on the literature and for well-rounded participating citizens of a democracy. In English classrooms, an emphasis was placed

on “social mingling among the students” (Graves, 2010, p. 102). The goal was to include more interaction among students, thus fostering them to work together better and more productively.

Progressive Education and the Eight-Year Study

After World War I, there was a shift in teachers’ instruction across the country toward nationalism. This shift could be seen in the literature assigned to students in the postwar secondary English classrooms (Applebee, 1974) and in the speeches from leaders in the field (Radner, 1960). In Radner’s collection of presidential speeches across 50 years of NCTE meetings, President Hosic’s address to the NCTE conference in 1920, noted that “American authors will be chosen, not merely because they are more interesting and perhaps in spite of the facts that in some cases they are less effectively written than others, but because they are American” (p. 2). This statement shows the importance placed on reading American authors after the close of the Great War. Here, the president of NCTE recognized that American authors may be “less effectively written,” but urged English educators to use American authors because they “are Americans.” Moreover, in schools at this time, “the primary goal of public schools enrolling immigrant children was to transform them into Americans” (Cuban, 1993, p. 63). Even as new students migrated to the United States, nationalism was required curriculum in public schools. In all classes, teachers were expected to teach students to be Americans and to be proud of their country. English classes from this point in time thus incorporated more American authors into high school curricula.

In the early 1900s, progressive education was forging its way into the U.S. educational systems (Kliebard, 2004). Progressive educators felt that education should be student-focused and not teacher-centered. The formation of the classroom changed by moving desks into a circle or in clusters (Cuban, 1993). The idea was that the student, not the teacher, was the focus of the

classroom. In the progressive classroom, students worked in small groups, engaged in student-led discussions, worked in centers or on projects, and moved freely about the classroom (Cuban, 1993).

Dewey (1902/1976, 1916/1998, 1938/1997) was a proponent of this progressive movement. His ideas about educative experiences supported the notion that students should experience things that motivate them to learn and experience more. "Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had" (Dewey, 1938/1997 p. 27). Dewey not only identified the value of experience but also hoped that educators provided "educative" experiences for their students. Educative experiences "prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. That quality was the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience" (p. 47). Educative experiences provided opportunity for more experiences, more learning in the future. Students could have educative experiences, and teachers (as constant learners) could as well.

Dewey (1938/1997) described two different schools of thought in educating the child in order to point out a third school of thought that is missing from the field of education, one that included the teacher. The first was centered on curriculum: the student's prior experiences do not matter when it comes to teaching the curriculum. The teacher focuses time on facts and figures until the child is mature enough to understand them. The student learns what the teacher tells him/her to learn. The other school of thought was child focused: the teacher primarily uses the child's past experiences as a foundation for teaching facts and figures. This line of thought supported the notion that with enough experiences the student will become educated. In the student-focused classroom, students were engaged in their learning rather than listening to a teacher who was standing in the front of the room telling them what they were supposed to be

engaged in. These two schools of thoughts were also known as traditional education (curriculum-centered) and progressive education (child-centered).

In 1942, the Progressive Education Association (PEA) published the Eight-Year Study. This empirical study tested the principles of experiential education as Dewey (1938/1997) suggested. In this study, 30 schools across the country were asked to participate by "ignoring college requirements and, instead, reconstructing their curriculum" (Cuban, 1993, p. 83) to include the imagination of the students and the creativity of both the students and staff. When the final report was published, the experiment was declared successful (Cuban, 1993). Students in the progressive classrooms were just as college ready as those in the traditional classroom, and teachers were "generally complimentary toward the program" (p. 89). This report from the PEA drove changes from the current curriculum based on college and vocational preparation to a curriculum focused on student experience and needs.

Life Adjustment

In the beginning of the 1940s, English teachers incorporated personal identity curriculum that associated student identity to the literature called life adjustment (Applebee, 1974; Herschbach, 1997; Kliebard, 2004; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). The culture of high school students was changing during this decade and there was a new group of students referred to as the "new 50%" (Herschbach, 1997, p. 25). This group of students "did not aspire to go on to college, yet were not interested in pursuing vocation studies" (p. 25). To meet the needs of these students, Charles Prosser, recognized as the Father of Vocational Education, created a curriculum that included practical work and social objectives most commonly referred to as life adjustment curriculum (Applebee, 1974; Herschbach, 1997). English educators embraced this new curriculum by encouraging students to find themselves in the literature, and classroom

discussions were based on real experiences related to the literature. Educators also responded to teaching life adjustment by infusing social studies and English into one curriculum (Applebee, 1974). This infusion meant that social studies teachers taught using literature and that English teachers referred to the history relating to the literature they taught. NCTE created National Council of Teachers of English Commission on the English Curriculum to develop curriculum in response to changes that involved English, such as life adjustment.

While the life adjustment curriculum played out in schools over the next several years, the Russians launched the satellite Sputnik into space in 1957. Americans were not happy that the Russians were seemingly more advanced in science and math and had begun the space race because of their advancement in these subjects. The government quickly passed The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. President Eisenhower knew the U.S. was ahead of the Soviets in math and science, but continued with the legislation. While the NDEA focused on science and mathematics curriculum, English teachers felt the effects. Reading and writing, specifically in the area of research, rather than literacy studies, became the focal curriculum for English teachers during this time (Strain, 2005).

The Continued Growth of English through the 20th Century

Between the 1950s and the present, English teachers and schools across the nation witnessed a number of changes, growth, and the onset of digital technologies and literacies. For instance, English educators began to focus more on the writing process versus the final product (Emig, 1971; Flowers & Hayes, 1981; Graves, 1975). The writing process was a series of steps that students followed to improve their writing skills and increase productivity. Researchers gathered all of the existing studies on teaching writing (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer, 1963) and updated that research periodically as trends in teaching changed (Hillocks,

1986; Smagorinsky, 2006). Teachers also became researchers of their own practices (Atwell, 1987), changing the notions of who could do research. The conversation about language also changed. In 1974 the Conference on Composition and Communication issued a statement about the rights that students have to learn and express themselves in the languages they use at home. As perspectives and research on teaching literature, writing, and language shifted over the years, coalitions of English educators came together to process the state of the field. In the following, I outline two important coalition meetings that represent moments in which the English education community gathered to discuss trends in teaching English.

English Coalition Conference. Elbow (1990) reported on the first of these two commission meetings. The 1987 conference was sponsored by NCTE and the Modern Language Association of America and held in Queenstown, Maryland. Elbow attended the conference, took copious notes, and wrote a book about both the conference and the paths in English education that led to that particular gathering of educators. One of the participants, McHugh (1990), reported on trends in teaching conditions from 1957 to 1997, including changes in student attitudes and demographics in public schools. During this time, integration of students changed the overall makeup of students in schools. The population in the U.S. increased during the 1950s with the Boomer generation and high school graduation rates increased. Families changed as well. McHugh found that in 1957, students seemed to be more manageable and concerned about their education. Most students had two parents who were married to one another, attended school functions, and helped with homework. Fast-forward to 1987 and students were more sophisticated and more experienced with drugs, sex, drinking, and talking about these experiences freely with their peers. Many of these students lived in single parent homes with little to no supervision. Few parents participated in school activities or asked about

schoolwork. The 1980s also found overcrowded schools with teachers relying on old, outdated textbooks.

Attendees further agreed that teachers were caring, committed, and professional. The discussion centered on three areas: language, democracy, and theory. Language was a central component to teaching English (Elbow, 1990). The attendees found that language was actively used in a diversity of ways and settings. English educators ensured that students understood and reflected on the multiple ways they used English in their lives both in school and out of school. Teachers showed that they cared about the students and what they were learning, nourishing and challenging notions about and the purposes for using language.

Attendees also came to the conclusion that the underlying purpose of the conference was democracy in education (Elbow, 1990). Specifically, they found that one of the goals of English courses was to make students thoughtful citizens. In English courses, teachers encouraged students to question, interpret, and evaluate the media or previously accepted views of texts. For example, one of the discussions resolved that it was not up to educators to take care of the jobs neglected by society (e.g., morals, values, parenting, shelter); but, teachers should encourage free thought and focus on the "more manageable core of learning" (Elbow, 1990, p. 32), namely the content of the English subject area.

The conference attendees had a third focal point on theory (Elbow, 1990). They concluded that English teachers should be making sure students were theoretically aware. Following the lines of thoughtful citizens, they noted that there was value in encouraging students to not only understand existing literary theories, but also to construct their own theories. These resolutions discouraged the practiced of students accepting the teacher's or author's prescribed theory as the only theory for critiquing literature.

Conference on English Education Summit. In 2006, another coalition of English educators met in Atlanta, Georgia. Attendees discussed the current trends in teaching that were influencing English education in the new millennium. Miller and Fox (2006) invited 75 English educators from diverse backgrounds and schools to write a series of articles to "guide the future efforts of CEE in English teacher preparation" (p. 266).

The attendees agreed that democracy and education was still a concern as English teachers continued to incorporate free thought and encourage the development of thoughtful citizens (Miller & Fox, 2006). Furthermore, educators maintained a high value for the languages, discourses, and cultures that the diversity of students brought into schools. "The authors maintain that all students need to be taught mainstream power codes and discourses and become critical users of language while also having their home and street codes honored" (p. 273). At the heart of the conference, then, was the recognition of diversity and multiculturalism as important components in the teaching of English. New to the conversation was a discussion of 21st century literacies.

The National Council for Teachers of English (2013) defined 21st century literacies as a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments the 21st century, literacy demands now include a wide range of abilities and competencies. This literacy calls on teachers and students to develop proficiency and fluency with technology, design and share information for global communities, create, and analyze multimedia texts, and build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively. At the CEE summit, one committee created to discuss and write about technology, argued that in their changing society, technological literacies must be

central to English curriculum (Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006). Miller and Fox (2006) characterized their analysis as important work that showed "how reflection on new technologies and integration of them into coursework for specific purposes is an educational, political, and even a moral imperative" (p. 274). Indeed the work across the summit and among the many members in each of the working groups showed that work of teaching and researching English as a subject is ongoing and dynamic.

The history of English as a school subject is extensive and multifaceted. What I present here is just a brief overview of how English came to be the course that is found in schools across the country. My study adds to this history as three veteran teachers share how reforms affected their teaching practices and what their English classrooms looked like from the 1960s though 2014.

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I provide the reader with an in depth look at narrative, narrative theory, and narrative inquiry, as well as a biography and history of the teachers, the school, and the subject. In the next chapter, I explain how I created this study, what types of analysis I used to develop the findings, and a rationale for presenting the findings in a manner that interweaves the literature review of educational reforms, the teaching of English in the last 50 years, and the personal narratives of teachers involved in this history.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

> Experience happens narratively…Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19)

In order to learn about the stories of three teachers, I employed qualitative narrative research methods. These methods helped me to collect their stories, engage in conversation with the teachers, and systematically analyze what they had to say about educational reforms. I approached this work by framing the study with theories of culture (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; & Smagorinsky, 2001) and experience (Dewey, 1938/1997), and by using data collection and analysis methods in keeping with these theories. My methods included interviewing, artifacts analysis, and recursive analyses of the transcripts of interviews and documents related to the reforms. The following sections detail the ways that I conducted my research and explain how I developed the findings that follow in chapter 5.

Gathering Narratives

Sociocultural theory played a large role in crafting how I conducted this study. Vygotsky (1978) argued that in order to understand a person, researchers must understand where a person comes from socially and culturally. I relied on qualitative interview methodology to collect data about the social and cultural experiences of teachers with educational reforms. There are many other methods of collecting data that I could have used to inform this study, but, I wanted to focus on teacher narratives because narrative theory points out that stories alone have the power to instruct, reveal, and inform (Eisner, 1997).

When using interviews, I observed, listened, and asked questions because I was "interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13)

about their personal experiences with educational reforms. I also used this method because I have a relationship with the teachers; I gained personal information about their experiences in an environment based on mutual trust and support (Greenberg, 1997/1998).

In this chapter, I explain who I am in relationship to this study, how I collected and analyzed the data while also explaining how I determined to share the findings in a non-traditional dissertation method. I begin with a detailed explanation of my role in this study as a researcher and what I did in preparation for a study compromised of interviews.

Subjectivities and Responsibilities

I am a white middle-class female English teacher. Like the teachers in this study, I belonged to the idiocultures of the community, school, and department that I studied. When discussing educational reforms, I was passionate about how the reforms have affected students, teacher morale, classroom experiences and wanted to talk at length about my critiques with some of the reforms. When completing this study, I quickly recognized that when listening to these teachers' stories, I was the listening through the lens of a researcher, not a participant. As the audience member, I heard these stories with my background, teaching experiences, and biases. When sharing the narratives of my teachers, I chose what stories were told and in what context. This was important to recognize because I made choices about how their stories were told by deciding what to share and what to leave out, what order to put their stories in, and what to include as they told their stories (gestures, paraphrasing, laughs).

The Bracketing Interview

I began this study by taking part in a bracketing interview (Kramp, 2004). Before I started the interview process with the participants, I engaged in an interview similar to those my participants experienced. For several hours Dr. Zoss, my advisor, asked me the questions from

my interview protocol (see Appendix A), and I responded with stories about my classroom experiences with educational reforms. The bracketing interview served several purposes for me. First, I had an opportunity to talk about my own experiences and my feelings about the reforms. Second, I had an occasion to respond to the questions with another person. Thus, I would be less inclined to interject my own stories when listening to teachers share their stories. And third, I had better self-awareness of my own prejudices in reference to educational reforms (Kramp). Having to respond to the same or similar questions as my participants helped me better understand my feelings and experiences with the reforms. Finally, I completed the bracketing interview so that I could hear the interview questions I prepared.

Hearing and responding to the questions helped prepare me to interview the participants. I was confident that my study was important to the participants because, as a teacher, it was reassuring to have someone value my experiences though the act of asking me about them. In addition, having my advisor show me her interview techniques aided me tremendously in learning how to interview participants. I learned about what type of follow up questions could be used. She modeled pausing to give the respondent time to think and answer the question fully. My advisor took interview notes and showed me what she was notating (gestures, nuances, time) as she wrote. During this interview, she interrupted the interview and gave me interview pointers, and then would return to asking me questions. I was able to be both the student-learner and participant during this time. All of these lessons gave me the confidence as I began the interview process. Once the bracketing interview was over, I also had a chance to revisit, rewrite, and add or delete questions I planned on asking.

Data Collection

I used three forms of data collection for this study: teacher interviews, group interviews, and archived information. Relying on interviews aligns with a sociocultural framework because the interview format that I gave a space to understand how these teachers created meaning socially. As previously noted, relying on interviews is aligned with a sociocultural theory in that I provided a space to understand how these teachers created meaning through our social interaction. I designed this study to focus on narratives and narrative theory (Bruner, 1987); therefore, I collected data through both individual and group semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 2009). I included archived information because the culture of the school was invaluable to the understanding of the experiences shared by the teachers (Bruner, 1987; Dewey, 1938/1997; & Vygotsky, 1978).

Individual Interviews

While I had a list of questions to follow using a semi-structured interview approach (Appendix A), I used the questions as guides and raised other questions as needed. Through interviews, I was able to "understand experiences and reconstruct events in which [I] did not participate" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 3). I listened to and audio recorded the narratives these three women told about their teaching experiences with educational reforms from desegregation to No Child Left Behind (2002). The interviews were topical (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) because I explored the what, where, when, why, and how these teachers experienced educational reforms.

I interviewed each participant individually multiple times for several hours during the months of December 2013 and January 2014. During each interview, I took notes to add additional information to the transcriptions, specifically notating movements or gestures during the conversation. When people tell stories, non-verbal communication plays an important role

(Krauss, Chen, & Chawla, 1996). For example, the participant might bang her hand on the table or cross her arms and sit back in an angry manner. This movement added to her narrative as I endeavored to understand more about what these reforms meant to each teacher that words might leave out (Zoss, 2009). In my notes, I notated non-verbal expressions with the time it occurred and a notation for the phrase or word that accompanied the gesture. As I transcribed the interviews, I added my interview notes to the transcriptions to better reconstruct on paper the narratives as the participant told them. After each interview, I kept memos about my reflections of what was said and other questions I needed to add for the next interview in an interview journal. These memos were separate from my interview notes. I used these memos in the drafting of the language of the dissertation.

I audio-recorded and transcribed all of the interviews in order to be more familiar with each transcription and to include the little nuances of each story including pauses, whispers, laughter, yelling, and gestures that took place. While I did not include those gestures or voice inflections in quotes found in this dissertation, I used them as tools to select stories. I found that stories told with a laugh, or a bang on the table, or a whisper were those experiences that the teachers were most passionate about. I attempted to include experiences that mattered most to the teachers and gestures or voice inflections were one of the components I used to decide which stories to include in this study. How they told their stories helped me to better understand each participant, her narratives, and the role those stories played in this study.

The first few interviews included nuances that presented me, a novice researcher, with some of the difficulties found in the process of interviewing. As I was taking interview notes, I realized that I used questions that elicited a yes/no response, rather than open-ended questions that could allow teachers a space to expand on their responses. During the second round of

interviews, I wrote reminders such as NO YES/NO across the top of the page, or THINK BEFORE YOU ASK as a reminder on the interview questions page. This notation helped, but did fully not stop me from asking yes/no questions. Fortunately, my participants did not follow my lead and rarely responded with yes or no. They answered the questions with longer, elaborate explanations.

Each participant chose the time and location of the interviews. Ms. Jay and I met three times in her classroom for a total of four and half hours. Ms. Cardinal and I met off campus twice, each interview lasting nearly two hours in length, and Ms. Robbins and I met twice in her classroom for approximately three hours total. During the first interviews, I gathered initial data about why the teacher chose teaching, why she chose to work and continue her career at Smalltown High School, her college education, and what her experiences were on the first day/year in the classroom. Each participant also shared other stories as we discussed family, faculty, and the community of Smalltown. During the subsequent interviews, we discussed the educational reforms that occurred after each began her teaching career and the effects of those reforms on her classroom practices.

Group Interview

I also included a group interview with all three teachers together, in addition to the individual interviews, to capture stories and interactions among the teachers (Merriam, 2009). Because sociocultural theory framed this study, I paid close attention to their shared meanings found during the group interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). By bringing all three teachers together for a semi-structured, focus group interview, I was able to create a space for these teachers to explore and reflect on their shared experiences together. This interview lasted approximately

two and half-hours. I used interview questions about the subject of English and the educational reforms shared by all of the participants found in Appendix B.

The group interview was also important because "dialogue between veteran and novice teachers may help us discover where we should be headed in our curricular journey or perhaps even how we might arrive at a sense of continuity and coherence in the English curriculum" (Fox, 1995, p. 23). A teacher with over 20 years' experience in the classroom may not be considered a novice teacher. However when Ms. Robbins had a conversation with Ms. Jay, a teacher who had been teaching for thirty years before Ms. Robbins began her career, she may feel like a novice. Like Fox, I found that the dialogue and narratives shared between these three teachers provided insights on how they have worked together over time. The stories about the educational reforms that have came and went in the past 20 years since Ms. Robbins stated teaching provided me with a sense of continuity and coherence that they felt toward one another. As I was listening to and guiding this conversation as a researcher and not just participating as a peer, their conversations showed a sense of their community and their shared idioculture in the department.

Archived Information

There is a local museum that housed an exhibit about Smalltown High School, and the history of the school. Part of the exhibit included SHS history club student interviews with students, alumni and alumnae, and previous administrators about their experiences at SHS. These interviews were recorded and put on CDs according to the decade the student or administrator attended SHS. The students also collected documents, old yearbooks, and student paraphernalia, including old school athletic and band uniforms, letterman jackets, textbooks, and other items. On my first visit to the museum, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of

my study to the museum curator. He was very generous with me, inviting me to come anytime the museum was open to access the information. He also invited me to a Kiwanis luncheon that he was speaking at about this historical exhibit; unfortunately, I could not attend because of a previous engagement. My first visit lasted about five hours as I watched all of the interview videos, taking detailed notes. On the second visit, I spent two hours examining information about the documents on display and skimming some of the historical texts that I found. This visit lasted nearly two hours. I went to the museum a third time to watch some of the interviews for a second time to fill in some of the missing pieces.

I watched the interviews that took place with students and teachers who went to North High School in the 1960s, who attended SHS during before and after integration, and who attended or taught during the 1970s and 1980s. I choose these decades because I was putting together the history of SHS and wanted to include more detailed information than the teachers in this study had or shared.

Reform Documents

I also used the educational reforms documents as data. I completed a Google search to locate the original texts of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983). I also used a collection of important educational reforms (Jossey-Bass, 2001) as a supplementary text to the original documents I printed. The collection included *Brown v. Board* (1954) and *ANAR* (1983), along with several other important educational reforms.

Because the No Child Left Behind (2002) legal document was 780 pages in length, I had to narrow my use of this document in a smaller selection. I located the complete mandate online and did a search for the term *teachers*. There was no section that I could locate that specifically spoke about teachers. I then changed my search to *schools*. Again, there was not anything

specific to schools other than the word school used throughout the document. In other words, I was not able to locate a section that centered on the expectations of schools, but rather found all of the instances where the term school was found. My final search was for the term *states* because I believed that if I could discover what was required of each state, I would then be able to understand what was expected from schools and teachers. This search led me to Section 1111, State Plans. This section is about academic standards, accountability, timelines, assessments, student achievement, and provisions to support teachers.

Data Analysis

I used several forms of narrative analysis to examine the data from interviews and reform documents: value, interactional, thematic, and performative. I began with value analysis of the reform documents to better understand what the authors valued in the reforms (Daiute & Kreniske, 2013). Examining the values of the authors led to a clearer picture of how these documents supported shifts in education. Using Riessman's (1993) thematic, performative, and interactional methods of narrative analysis falls in line with Bruner's (1996) narrative theory that includes contrasting and confronting the narratives shared. As I review each method of analysis, I include the codes I used in this study in italics. They can also be found in Appendix C.

Value Analysis

To examine the educational reforms, I utilized value analysis (Daiute & Kreniske, 2013). Using this analysis, I looked at the values embedded in written documents: the Supreme Court opinion for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the complete text of *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983), and section 1111 of NCLB (2002). I used these values to help me better understand each of the reforms, and as a tool to assist me in understanding what the teachers valued in regards to each reform.

When I first started considering values the authors presented in the documents, I realized that I was focused on the wrong definition of value. I was looking for what the values of the authors were, rather than what the authors valued. As I was struggling, I started to think about the different definitions of value. For this study, I relied on my understanding that a value was what the authors found important and illustrated in the documents. Because repetition was a sign of things that are important or valued in text, I began looking for words or phrases that were repeated within the documents.

In *Brown v. Board* (1954), I focused on *equal* education, *public education*, and *denial* of education because those were words and phrases repeated in the Supreme Court decision. The justices based their decision on equality, and what equality meant in regards to a public education. They ruled that in order for all students to receive an equal public education, students needed to be integrated.

When reading *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983), I focused on words that were related to *risk*. The authors titled the piece with a phrase that told the American public that the very nation was at risk. Because they included the term *risk* in the title, I used it to start examining what was valued in the text. As I read this document, like Marshall (2009) and Ravitch (2010), I found many references to battle words or words that invoked *warfare*. I also noticed a shift of pronoun usage found throughout this document. There were times when the authors used *we* to include themselves, along with the reader as American citizens and other times when they separated themselves by using *them* when referring to the state of education. The authors also called for *standards* as one of the resolutions to repair the poor state of education. They argued that standards would aid students into becoming successful American citizens.

When reading the section that concentrated on state requirements (Section 1111) of NCLB (2002), I started by using the codes found in the *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision because I believed that the code of *equality* I used in that document might also be found in Section 1111 of NCLB (2002). I also found new codes in the language that were repeated throughout the section, for example, *assessment* and *standard*. This was the same standard code I used for *ANAR* (1983). Once I completed the coding of the reforms, I reread each document to double check that I found excerpts that best fit each code.

Analyzing the Interviews

Once I transcribed all of the interviews, I started analyzing the transcripts. This process helped me to figure out how I wanted to share findings and what findings I wanted to share. I kept returning to my research questions. I felt like the questions limited me in some ways, but also kept me more focused in other areas. I was limited because I just asked about the teachers' experiences, and their experiences with some of the reforms were minimal. On the other hand, the focus of the research questions helped me to stay on task; the research questions kept me centered on the teachers' stories about the reforms. Thankfully, my theoretical framework guided me to explore more than just teachers' experiences with reforms, because their experiences depended on the cultures and idiocultures of the community, school, and department in which they worked. As I read the interviews, I wanted to be sure that I created codes in order to answers to the research questions, as well as create codes that were aligned with my theoretical frameworks.

I analyzed in several different ways. The first pass was a valued analysis based on codes used in the reform documents and identifying what the teachers valued beyond what was in those codes. I transcribed the interviews myself in order to be familiar with my data. As I read and

reread the transcriptions, I was able to see common codes (Johnson, 2005). Johnson argued that codes do not emerge. They have actually been there the whole time; it is up to the researcher to locate them. I applied codes based on my theoretical framework, research questions, and the ideas about educational reforms I identified in the data. I previously noted how I looked for the codes in the documents for the value analysis piece. I did the same thing for the teachers' transcriptions. I looked for words and phrases that were repeated to help me understand what the teachers valued. I looked for topics that the teachers spoke about in length: Stories that included people, something that happened that they believed was important, and stories related to the reforms were three areas that I coded. I also coded for similar narratives among the three teachers. Any topic that all three touched upon, either in agreement or disagreement, also got a code. I then used Dedoose to attached excerpts to the codes to see the big picture better. In this space, I started piecing together my findings. I describe and explain the codes within each of the different analysis sections.

I then took a hiatus in spring, 2014 from writing and thinking about my study to finish the end of the school year and my day job. Upon returning to my data, I found it necessary to code again using a different method because a stretch of time passed, and I was unsure if the original codes I found were still obvious. I used a color-coding method this time. As I read the transcripts, I highlighted excerpts in different colors to show what codes they referenced. For example, narratives that centered on textbooks were highlighted in green. When teachers shared narratives about their first days of school, I used pink. This helped me to see in color chunks which codes were central to their experiences. I also used shapes to highlight the different reforms. When the topic of integration was brought up, I starred those passages. When state-standards were the topic of the story, I circled those passages, and when standardized tests were

the focal point, I underlined. This allowed me to locate the three different reforms quickly and see which areas the teachers discussed most. I used this last pass through the data as a means for reacquainting myself with the data, understanding the codes I already created, and develop axial code families to show the relationships among the codes that I had already developed (Saldaña, 2012). The process through which I developed these codes was a multi-layered analysis involving: interactional, thematic, and performative analysis methods.

Models of Narrative Analysis

I used different models of analysis to gain perspective on the teachers' stories. Riessman (1993) suggested four models of narrative analysis because a single form of narrative analysis was insufficient to learn the nuances within stories. She recommended the following approaches: structural, interactional, thematic, and performative. While Riessman defined four models, she did not suggest that they be used alone. I did not use all four methods of analysis, but relied on three of them for this study. I open this section with an explanation of Riessman's method of structural analysis and why I did not use it. I then explain the different models of analysis I employed including why and how I used them to analyze my data.

Structural analysis. Structural analysis looks at how the stories are told and focuses less on what is said. In this analysis model, the researcher pays close attention to the function of the overall narrative (Riessman, 2003). This method of analysis relies on the construction of the narrative: how did the participant tell the story? Did the conflict begin the story, come at the middle, or was it used at the end as an unresolved narrative? Was the building of the narrative told in chronological order? Was the resolution told at the beginning of the story? Discovering the answers to these questions is a sound method of analysis that allows the researcher to compare and contrast narratives (Riessman, 2003; Rodesiler, 2013). Once I collected the data, I

realized that I wanted to focus on what was said, and not on the structure of each narrative. I did not use this method because it was the whole that I valued, and not the parts that made up the whole.

Interactional analysis. In this model, the researcher pays close attention to how the participants create their shared narratives together (Riessman, 1993; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Because of their shared idioculture, I wanted to see how the teachers' interactions and conversation happened and what new or different experiences and/or stories they discussed because of the social interaction involved in the group interview (Vygotsky, 1978). Interactional analysis allowed me to look critically at the group interview. I paid close attention to how the teachers "created meaning collaboratively" (Riessman, 1993, p. 4). Together they discussed shared *changes* in *state standards* and their *opinions* about which ones they preferred. The topics of *block scheduling* and *technology* were important reforms that these teachers felt affected their teaching practices as a result of educational reforms. I also learned more about their shared experiences at SHS.

Thematic analysis. When employing thematic analysis, "emphasis is on the content of a text, 'what' is said more than 'how' it is said" (Riessman, 2003, p. 332). When analyzing the data, I looked for recurring themes in the stories, including similar plotlines to draw from when retelling the narratives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I paid close attention to the language each participant used, specifically to "collect many stories and inductively create conceptual groupings from the data" (p. 2). I grouped the stories from the interviews based on code families I created previously. For example, two of the codes that I found were the *scope and sequence* document and the changes found in *textbooks.* All three teachers referenced a scope and sequence curriculum document in terms of: how it was created, what it looked like, and/or its

multiple purposes. I also noted each teacher's biographical information such as *education* and *first year of school*. *State standards*, the *changes in state standards*, and *opinions* about the standards were all topics that each teacher talked about at length.

Performative analysis. This model of analysis provided more emphasis on the performance of the narrative (Riessman, 1993). In this model, researchers look closely at how the narrative is told. When a participant whispers a narrative, or gets angry while telling the story, the researcher can use performative analysis to further understand what or why this is happening. In my study, I focused on how the teachers told their stories. For example when asking about how a teacher learned about a reform, I paid close attention to how she spoke about the reform. What words to did she use to describe, name, or otherwise talk about the reform? Did the teacher tell the same story more than once? How did the story play out: Was there a time when she told a story about the reform quickly? All of these questions helped me to better understand how the narrative was being performed as a kind of story. In other words, performative analysis provided a lens for looking at the details of how stories within stories were told, how stories within the interviews connected to each other, and the relative speed, emphasis, and repetition of those stories played out in the interview data. When reading interview transcriptions and my interview journal, I paid close attention to gestures, emphasis, word choices, and other qualities to notate how each narrative was told. As I chose which stories to share in this narrative, I paid close attention to the questions I raised previously. If a story was told with great passion, or multiple times, I made sure to include it. For example, Ms. Cardinal raised her voice when she was talking about the *media* and its negative perceptions of teachers, but then lowered her voice as she reminisced about the *faculty lounge*. While I did not specifically use codes for these gestures and inflections, I highlighted the stories told multiple

times, as well as the notes that I added to the transcriptions that include the voice inflections to include them in this form of analysis.

I also used performative analysis when selecting which stories to tell verbatim and which to paraphrase. A story that did not include gestures, changes in inflection of the voice during the telling of it was paraphrased. All three teachers' mentioned how their *classroom* and *faculty lounge* became like a second *home* to them, but did not spend a great deal of time with this topic. When a story that was told multiple times or with great passion in the form of voice inflections or gestures; I retold the story in the exact language of the participant. Ms. Jay shared her experience with NCLB and having to prove that she was a *highly qualified teacher* multiple times with me so that narrative was told in entirety using her words. She twice mentioned that the *words of wisdom* shared to her by her first administrator were key to her being able to spend time gaining *discipline* in her classroom.

Representation of Findings

In presenting my findings, I drew on examples from researchers who used teacher or student narratives as data and to present their findings such as Hankins (2003), Ladson-Billings (1994), Pope (2003), and Rose (2006). None of the authors used academic jargon to confuse the reader or relied on statistics alone to present their analyses; rather, these researchers used narratives to share their inquiry about a phenomenon. They reported their findings using narrative analysis in an influential voice or using multiple voices that in turn allowed their readers to feel as if they were a part of the story and did not rely on dense academic language that can marginalize readers who may not be used to scholarly discourse (Bell, 2002). As a reader, I related to the work of these scholars because the writing evokes shared story telling practices and experiences that had the opportunity to resonate with my own personal

experiences. I provide a discussion next of how each author provided a specific role model for crating the representations in this study.

Stories of Children in School

While I focused my study on high school teacher experiences, Pope (2003) studied student experiences in a high school setting. In her book, each chapter explained one student's story. Her findings about each student were woven into each chapter, written as a narrative. The result was a commentary that included thick description while providing a vivid understanding of each of the students' experiences with school. Based on this model, my findings chapter might have been broken up into a chapter for each teacher. Using this approach suggested that it may be possible to present each teacher's story separately, with my voice functioning as a narrator for the plot, action, and monologue or dialogue built from the teachers' stories.

Using Pope's (2003) model of segregating each teacher's narrative into a chapter was much more difficult than I expected. I anticipated that this method of giving each teacher her own space would make sharing her stories easier to write. For instance, everything about Ms. Robbins might go into Ms. Robbins' chapter. As I reviewed Ms. Robbins's data (I used her as a starting point because she only experienced NCLB (2002)) and began to think about what her chapter might look like, I found myself asking several questions: What do I include and what do I drop when telling her story? What story am I trying to tell about her? Whose story am I telling? I went back to Pope's (2003) book looking for direction. I found that Pope used a short biographical introduction for each student. I thought that if I included a small amount of background information, as well as explain the cultures of each teacher and how her background contributed to her experiences—much like my theoretical framework proposed, I would be more aligned with Pope. I also found that when going back to Pope's book, she used many direct

quotes. Even with these intentions in mind, I still struggled between telling Ms. Robbins's complete story and answering the research questions I developed for this study.

As I wrote about Ms. Robbins, I was confused as to what to include and what to leave out: Starting with the biography did not help as I expected. I also found that when I just told Ms. Robbins' story alone, I left out the other two teachers. Their shared stories seemed to work better together, rather than separately. The narratives complemented one another. If I separated the narratives, I ran the risk of repeating experiences and not allowing the reader to fully understand how these teachers' experienced educational reforms. That is, these teachers worked in the same building for much of their professional careers, so separating them seemed inauthentic when presenting their stories. While attempting to write Ms. Robbins' story, I found myself returning to Pope's (2003) book, asking many more questions than finding answers. One of my biggest concerns was how she selected the stories she told. My writing never flowed as easily as I thought it should have, and I turned to Hankins (2003) and Rose (2006) models writing the narrative chronologically.

Chronological Stories of Schools

Hankins (2003) relied on narratives written in her journals to share how she made it through one year of teaching. Rose (2006) traveled the country interviewing teachers, administrators, and students and made observations about the classrooms he visited. Both of their books are told in a chronological order, complete with the voices of students, parents, administrators, and teachers. Using this method, I could combine the teacher narratives not by theme or individual stories, but in a way that combined the narratives to follow the timeline of each reform.

When combining the stories to create a timeline of narratives, I still felt like something was missing. I began with Ms. Jay's transcripts and told the story of Smalltown High School and her experiences with integration. This method of writing was very easy. I liked the way it was going, but I felt like I was telling more of the story of these English teachers at Smalltown than in answering the research questions posed. Not all the stories that I wanted to use fit into a chronological narrative. I was not comfortable just putting the data in a undeviating order of time. While I present my findings in a chronological order related to the implementation of the reforms, they are more than that. The findings are mixed with theory, research, and the voice of the dramatic author (Booth, 1961).

Interweaving Theory in Stories of Teachers

In her work *The Dreamkeepers*, Ladson-Billings (1994) interviewed and observed five teachers and told their stories to discover "exemplars of effective teaching for African American students" (p. x). Ladson-Billings integrated theory and her personal narratives with the narratives of her participants. That is, she used stories from the teachers with her own commentary to show ways in which experienced educators taught African American students. Once I analyzed my findings, Ladson-Billings' book served as the best model for sharing my own findings. While Pope (2003), Hankins (2003), and Rose (2006) shared their studies in narratives I found to be valuable to my thinking, I relied on Ladson-Billing's (1994) interweaving of theory, literature, findings, and narratives as a model for this dissertation. I focused on creating a narrative not told by separating the teachers or in a strict chronological order. Rather, I present the study as an interweaving of theory, existing empirical literature, and experiences with educational reforms.

I thought that modeling the representation of findings after Ladson-Billings (1994) would be the most difficult. I struggled with confidence in my writing and felt like a writing fraud in the academic world. The idea of mixing research and theory frightened me because of my lack of confidence. Once I decided to present this dissertation as I wanted to and not how the traditional dissertation asks for, I wrote fluidly. I found my voice, my theoretical lens, and was able to share my findings in a way that best fit my style of writing. To be honest, I went into this thinking that this model would be the most difficult because it was so theory based. But, it was actually the easiest, probably because it allowed me to mix theory, literature, and the teacher narratives into a collective narrative. The biographies, the experiences, and the discussion were better presented as a narrative because of this connectedness. I found the confidence that I had something valuable to contribute because I was able to share my study in a way that best fit my voice and my data.

Among the methods important to a narrative inquiry, it is important to show the credibility of the study. It is up to me to convince the reader of this dissertation that I include enough detail of how this study was completed to ensure its validity and credibility (Merriam, 2009). One of the ways I ensured this was to share the bias's that may be found in this study, to explain verisimilitude in relation to this study, and to describe the member checks that I used.

Trustworthiness

This study is a collection of stories that are full of biases from the participants, researcher, and reader. When reading a story, the reader understands that the narrator brings his/her own biases and personal experiences to the narrative. This study is similar in that not only were the participants biased in what narratives they shared and how those narratives were told, I, as the researcher, was also biased in what narratives I chose to retell according to my

analysis and research questions and in what order I put the narratives together. The reader may also be biased depending on where and when he/she reads the collection of stories. All of this is to point out that while there is bias that exists throughout the creation of the study and the understanding of the results by outside readers, it is also important and possible to consider issues of trustworthiness within the complex of biases in which and through which this study was situated.

Verisimilitude

Evaluating the quality of narrative inquiry requires that the reader understand verisimilitude: the belief that a narrative could be true is more important than having to prove that it is true (Kramp, 2004). In qualitative, narrative inquiry, the impact or quality of the research should not require proof or evidence that the story at hand is an unwavering truth. It only matters that the reader believes that the story could be true and that the stories exhibit qualities of being real, lived experiences, in this case the experience of teachers (Kramp). The reader needs only to believe that the story could be true. My aim is for readers to believe the narratives here because they represent the meanings and experiences the teachers had with educational reforms, not because the stories can be proven as the exact, measurable truth of what reforms are or have been. For example, it would not be necessary to know the complete details of what happened to Ms. Jay on her first day of teaching in 1971 when African-American students were integrated at SHS; rather, what matters is what she made of that event, what meanings she attributed to that educational reform, and what can be learned from knowing more about the realities of teachers as they experienced reforms. The idea of verisimilitude is that the stories have a sense of realness, not that they have to be proved to be reality.

Member Checks

I employed member checks during the course of this study to ensure that I told/retold the teachers' stories with verisimilitude. When using member checking, I asked the teachers to "provide feedback on emerging findings" (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). I gave the teachers copies of their transcripts, along with the finding sections to ensure the credibility and verisimilitude of their narratives (Merriam). Member checking, to some extent, also occurred during the group interview with all three teachers in that they revisited stories they told in the individual interviews and had the opportunity to provide further details and clarity, for both their and my understandings of their experiences. I also shared the final dissertation with each participant to ensure that I represented her stories correctly. This reading took place before I sent the dissertation to my committee for approval.

Limitations

There are a few possible limitations to this study. The first is that I only used three participants who teach the same subject at the same school. Had I selected more than three teachers from varied content areas, or included teachers from other schools in other states, the data may have been very different. I also only used secondary teachers; elementary teachers may have different experiences with educational reforms. Another limitation is that I relied on interviews of the three teachers for my primary method of data collection. Had I included observations or interviews from those who knew the teachers, the stories about educational reforms may have shifted in way I could not fully anticipate at this point. Finally, I used three educational reforms as the foundation of this research. Had I included others, such as Race to the Top or Common Core State Standards, the conclusions about reforms may have changed. Indeed, the afterward points to some of the ongoing ramifications of these two reforms now taking on more prominent roles in the school.

The next chapter is divided into three main sections: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), *A Nation at Risk* (1983), and No Child Left Behind (2002). Within each section, I provide a summary of each reform including what the authors valued based on a value analysis that I conducted (Daiute & Kreniske, 2013). I also review the previous studies and literature about each reform interlacing those with the findings from the teachers in this study as they related to one another.

CHAPTER 4

THREE TEACHERS, THREE EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

> We [English teachers] need to act individually and collectively to engage in the public discourse on education. (Miller, 2006, p. 397)

In this chapter, I present the reforms that this study centered on: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1953), *A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983)*, and No Child Left Behind (2002). Each section includes a description of the reform and values the reform authors placed on the documents. I also review the research related to the specific reform while interweaving the experiences of the teachers to show, in part, how the SHS teachers' experiences aligned or not with prior studies.

Brown v. Board of Education and the Era of Student Desegregation

I begin this chapter with an explanation for why I use the term student desegregation rather than school desegregation. Hutcheson (2012) argued that schools, in fact, were not what were being desegregated in the 1960s and 1970s: students were. During the time of desegregation, African American educators were laid off or demoted at high rates. "Michael Fultz's article…concludes that 31,000 African American educators lost their positions or were demoted" (p. 8). In Hutcheson's review of articles published in the *Journal of Negro Education*, he found that teachers were not integrated but were segregated. This finding led Hutcheson to coin the term *student desegregation*. Educators were not moved around to ensure demographic equality among teachers, but students were moved to other schools to ensure demographic equality among students.

This point was important because when I spoke with Ms. Jay about her experiences with integration, I asked questions about student desegregation, but she also told stories about teacher movement to SHS in 1971. I found that desegregation affected her more through her interactions

with the new teachers around her, rather than the African American students who appeared in her classroom. Her conversations about this shift seemed to focus more on the teachers who moved in and stayed for many years than the students who arrived. Regardless of who was in the room or who taught in neighboring classrooms, Ms. Jay's approach to teaching English never wavered.

An Analysis of *Brown v. Board of Education*

The Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* found in favor of Brown by unanimous decision on May 17, 1954, thus ending legal segregation in public schools. The justices stated that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' had no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Warren, 1954, p. 2). The Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution includes an equal protection clause. This clause states that anyone born in the United States was a U.S. citizen, has the same rights as others born in the country, and every state is required to provide equal protection for all citizens. The justices ruled that segregated public schools violated protections guaranteed under the equal protection clause. They argued that the African American students who attended segregated African American schools were not provided the same rights as white students at white schools.

When looking at what was valued in the language used to rule *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), I found that the justices may have believed that equality in public education was important to a democratic society. A democratic society created good citizens and helped them live a successful life. The ruling to integrate schools was based on the notion that equality was not present in both white and black schools. "The plaintiffs contend that segregated public schools are not 'equal' and cannot be made 'equal,' and hence they are deprived of the equal protection of the laws…we have now announced that such segregation is a denial of the equal

protection of the laws" (*Brown v. Board*, 1954, p. 10). These words *equality*, *public education*, and *denial* were repeated throughout the decision.

Similar issues related to equality were found in Smalltown. "The black high school did not have the supplies that we had. They did not have the textbooks that we had. It might have been separate, but it was not equal" (Ms. Jay). It should be noted that while North High School had many opportunities for activities and student growth, it did not offer or have the same materials that SHS had. Students at NHS used old books, and teachers had to use old machines. One story I found in the archives described students in a chemistry class at NHS who tried to conduct an experiment but did not have the proper chemicals to complete it. The NHS chemistry teacher called a teacher from Smalltown High and borrowed the tools necessary to complete the experiment. While the teacher at SHS shared the materials needed to conduct the experiment, this was only one specific example of the African American school found in the archives not having the same supplies that the white high school had.

The public aspect of education was another value that the Supreme Court Justices emphasized. They argued that everyone deserved an equal public education and that education was "required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities" (*Brown v. Board*, 1954, p. 8). Ms. Jay taught everyone in her classroom the same way expecting nothing but the best from her students. According to her narratives, I gathered that cultural differences of students did not affect how she taught the content. When the African American students began attending classes at SHS, she did not change her teaching practices or curriculum. In alignment with the ruling of the Supreme Court that public education was an avenue for students to reach success, Ms. Jay continued to hold high standards for her students regardless of their race, religion, and/or cultural differences.

Reactions to the decision across the country. In the decade that followed the *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision, state legislators, governors, school districts, and individual schools in the North and the South did not follow the Supreme Court's decision. Governors and state lawmakers ignored the decision or closed schools in response to the ruling (Davidson, 1994). In Mississippi, Governor White said that the state was not going to "pay any attention to the Supreme Court's decision" (p. 98). Virginia's governor used legal means to refute the decision, and the Louisiana legislature enacted a mandate requiring the maintenance of segregated schools (Davidson). In Illinois, the state desegregation rule specified that only 15% of the schools must be desegregated (Danns, 2010). The negative reactions and laws passed by state officials in several Southern states to battle the *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision inspired violent protests, outrages, and civil suits as the integration era began: One of the most famous was the infamous Little Rock Nine.

In 1957, in Little Rock, Arkansas, nine African American students attempted to attend the all-white Central High School following the *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision. The protests and outrage by the white population in the community were loud and violent toward the nine students and their families. The governor at the time, Orval Faubus, called in the National Guard to block the African American students from entering the school. President Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army to personally escort the students to and from school each day to guarantee their safety. Faubus continued to do everything in his power, including attempting to close down all Little Rock high schools, to keep the African Americans out of Central High School. Central High School was closed down for the 1958-1959 school year, but was reopened the following year as a desegregated school. This example was by far not the only case of states and governors choosing to fight the *Brown v. Board* decision, but it was one of the

most famous examples of Southern resistance to integration during this era. Schools from across the country encountered multiple legal issues with school desegregation during the 1960s and 1970s.

Stories of protests by state citizens against student desegregation were documented in court cases found in the states of Illinois, Oklahoma, and Michigan, among others (Danns, 2010; Russo, 2004). In *Mcneese v. Board of Education, Community Unit School District 187, Cahokia, Illinois* (1963), Mcneese argued that the "alleged misconduct of school officials deprived minority students of equal protection" (Russo, Harris, & Sandidge, 1994, p. 301). In *Dowell v. Board of Education of the Oklahoma City Public Schools* (1969), the plaintiffs argued that changing school attendance boundaries did not solve the issue of how to desegregate. In Detroit, a group of parents and the NAACP sued the city to end racial segregation in its public schools (Russo, Harris, & Sandidge). Similar stories to these involving countless court cases requiring school officials to open their doors to other races can be found in other states across the country (Danns, 2010; Russo, 2004; Russo, Harris, & Sandidge, 1994). Parents and others brought lawsuits against school boards and states for both the lack of action to desegregate the schools and the direct misconduct of people in charge of making decisions for entire school districts.

Smalltown High School desegregated. In contrast to the documented hatred and animosity toward African Americans involved in the initial attempts to desegregate students in many cities, there were no documented violent acts at Smalltown High School, and the integration of African American students and teachers into what had been an all-white school seemed to take effect as efficiently as possible. When Ms. Jay began teaching in 1961, the school had no African Americans. Eight years later, because of the Schools of Choice movement that took place in this county, there were three African American seniors in the 1969

class of 173 students. This movement was a method used by the school district administrators located at the county's Central Office to begin the process of student desegregation. 1n 1970, the year prior to Smalltown High School officially becoming desegregated, there were nine African American seniors in the graduating class of 183. The following year, desegregation was fully implemented in the school system and the number of African American seniors rose to 106 out of 379. Nearly a third of the graduating class was African Americans. During these years of desegregation, the first and growing numbers of African Americans who attended the school arrived without incident. No lawsuits were filed, and no law enforcement was called in to ensure the safety of the students coming to school. While there were no violent uprisings in the public schools, an all-white private school opened at this same time. Ms. Jay was asked to teach in the private school prior to its opening but chose to stay at SHS because she said that she felt most comfortable there. Parents who did not want their children attending a desegregated school sent their students to the new private school. I next provide explanations for why SHS had few issues with desegregation as I review the literature found in other schools' stories of desegregation in relation of Smalltown High School.

Reactions of the community to SHS's integration. In Fletcher County, it seemed as if the schools were more accepting of integration than others in the area. There were two specific examples Ms. Jay shared when people did not accept the African Americans as equal members of the community as well as the school did:

> Well, I was doing the yearbook and, umm, I sent the yearbook staff out to sell ads. There were two black girls on the yearbook staff. And they had their list downtown, and, they would come back from the white-owned businesses downtown reporting those folks were not very polite. And I went into one of those stores on the square. And the man in the store said to me, "Lynn, you sent two little black girls in here to sell an ad. Send me two little white girls." I just said to him, "No, that's okay. Maybe we can do without your ad this year."

Another story Ms. Jay shared was that of an African-American couple trying to purchase a house in a predominately white neighborhood. Ms. Jay observed a conversation between the principal and a couple interested in living near SHS because the husband got a job in a town close to Smalltown. The principal of the school talked to the couple and assured them that he would help them out in any way possible. The wife was crying; she was upset because she really wanted to live in Smalltown, but the neighborhood where they wanted to live refused to let them purchase a house there. These two narratives are examples of how the community at large was not as readily accepting of desegregation. Ms. Jay, a white teacher, could not recall a single story of something negative taking place within the school walls; she could only remember these two examples of issues of integration in the surrounding community. In contrast to these two stories that occurred in the community, within the closed door spaces of SHS and Ms. Jay's classroom, African American students were welcome and taught as full and contributing members of the school.

Desegregation Studies

While I was unable to find studies that specifically investigated white teachers' experiences in predominately white schools during the decades of desegregation, I did locate several studies (Dingus, 2006; Grant, 1988; Wilson & Segall, 2001) that used interviews from both African American and white teachers to trace the history of desegregation in schools and/or school districts. Grant (1988) chronicled the history of a school located in the northeastern part of the United States; Wilson and Segall (2001) focused their historical analysis on the Southwest with Austin's public schools during the early 1970s. Both of these chronicles of school histories shared aspects of teacher experiences with desegregation as each area experienced it.

In a historical study, Grant (1988) chronologically told the history of Hamilton High (a pseudonym). In Hamilton High's story, Grant wrote about the predominately white school becoming integrated. Throughout the chapter about desegregation of Hamilton High, Grant shared the stories of both white and African American students and teachers as African American students were relocated to Hamilton High School. He wrote about the racial violence and riots that occurred on campus. There were fights that broke out at Saturday meetings that attempted to bring the African American and white communities together. The first several years of integration at this school were full of resentment and hostility among the students. It was a time of helplessness and a struggle for authorities to maintain any kind of discipline whether in the classroom or the hallways. Violent outbreaks (fights and protests) happened often.

Grant (1988) found that "white teachers worried about a "lack of respect for authority" (p. 26) because the African American students were resentful and represented a discipline problem. The white teachers were concerned that the African American students seemed "sullen" (p. 27) and did not understand why they were so unhappy in their new school. Grant also found that the white teachers did not feel as if they themselves were racist, yet they expected less from the African American students in class. They speculated that these students were less capable than their white peers, and based on a comparison of grades, the black students generally were given lower scores than their white counterparts. As the violence and riots escalated, "teachers were ground down, exhausted, defeated, and confused. Many felt an overwhelming sense of failure as teachers. By the fall of 1971, 72% of the teachers who had taught at Hamilton High in 1966 had resigned, retired, or transferred" (p. 44). Several years after the school was desegregated, the racial violence came to an end.

If Hamilton High School was an extreme example of the difficulties inherent with desegregation, then Smalltown High School was the extreme in the opposite direction. There were no stories of uprisings, or students acting out, no fights, and no teacher backlash. Just the opposite occurred. Ms. Jay could not recall any acts of violence or issues as the school became integrated. "I might have been so dumb and naïve, but I did not see, umm, problems. I didn't see problems. I didn't see prejudices. I didn't see bullying. I just saw, 'Okay, now you are in this class.' And they were in class."

Wilson and Segall's (2001) look at what happened in Austin Public Schools in the late 1960s included highlights from white teachers' experiences in African American schools and African American teachers' experiences in white schools. I include a review of each of these experiences from the Wilson and Segall text because it informed my understandings of Ms. Jay's narratives.

In the years following the *Brown v, Board of Education* (1954) decision, the citizens of Austin had several different reactions. Most African Americans celebrated because they knew that education was key to a successful freedom (Wilson & Segall, 2001) and the law-opened opportunities for them to be educated in the formerly all-white schools. At the same time, the reactions among white families were mixed. Some accepted the decision easily, but others were outraged by the announcement of desegregation. The Austin school board did not know how to react or what action to take in regard to the decision, and for the next ten years held many discussions about how to desegregate the schools. One of the solutions to desegregation was to move white teachers to the African American school, Anderson High School. This move was voluntary for teachers interested in moving to a predominately African American school. Three teachers who were interviewed for the study shared their experiences after moving to Anderson

in 1969. A female teacher from a local junior high described her first year as difficult. She noted that she was tested and that her discipline problems occurred because she "was being judged by the color of [her] skin" (p. 86). A male teacher with three years of experience had a much more positive first year. He stated that he enjoyed standing out because of his race and developed "strong relationships with his students" (p. 89) because he was different. A male coach and history teacher had a difficult first year because "the students couldn't read" (p. 90). The second year was much smoother for all three teachers, but especially for the female teacher because she felt she was more supported by the faculty and parents. All three teachers agreed that the differences between the African American students compared to the white students were not because of Anderson High School and the environment found there. Rather, they posited some home environments where the students came from might not have supported education as a whole or students were lacking in parental guidance, as the white teachers were accustomed to. This section of the book only brought up the reactions by the white teachers in their first years at Anderson High School. The authors did not discuss student reaction to the white teachers, nor did they mention interviews with African American teachers.

On the other side of town in Austin, African American teachers were called into the personnel office and given a choice of three or four schools to be transferred to while others received a letter in the mail stating which school they were being transferred to. The only choice that they received was to be relocated or resign. Iola Taylor's experiences with the faculty at her new predominately white school were very different from the white teachers' experiences. "There were teachers who were open and accepting and there were those who would prefer you not to be there. Then, there were others who were independently aloof" (Wilson & Segall, 2001, p. 92). Wilson and Segall also wrote about one African American teacher who thought her

students played tricks on her. They wrote that her sense of humor and ability to laugh got her through some "potentially difficult times" (p. 93). Again, this section focused only on the experiences of the African American teachers. There was no mention of white teachers, or white student experiences with the new African American of teachers. Meanwhile, neither the teachers whom I interviewed at SHS could remember, nor did those interviewed from the archives, talk about if teachers were forced to move to a new school or if the move was strictly volunteer, but both Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal spoke about several African American teachers who moved to SHS and spent the rest of their careers there.

The Transition to a Desegregated Smalltown High School

African American teachers moved from North High School to SHS, and white teachers moved to NHS. Ms. Jay recalled the movement of teachers between the two schools fondly:

> It didn't seem to be a big deal because we met the new faculty members. They were highly educated people, influential people. Affluent people. One of the English teachers, who had been teaching for a long time at North, had gotten her masters' at New York University. They had been places. I think it was easy to recognize that they are just as important as I am. These folks were smarter than I am. More highly educated than I am. You know, these black teachers who have come over here. I never viewed them as lower or unimportant or not as important as the rest of us.

Many of the teachers who made the move to SHS remained there until they retired. Ms. Cardinal remembered working with African American teachers who had been at Smalltown High for many years before she started teaching. The culture of SHS, from the perspectives of these teachers, was inviting and the faculty was so close knit that many African American teachers who moved from North High School spent the rest of their careers at SHS.

In 1971, Fletcher County Schools fully desegregated. The transition went calmly as far as former students and teachers could remember. The ease of the transition was attributed to several factors. An obvious reason was that the timing of this desegregation was nearly two

decades after the *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision, and seven years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Many counties and districts across the country had already been desegregated, and Smalltown had plenty of examples of both good and bad desegregation experiences. Another factor important to note was that members of the school board and school administrators went out into the African American community and invited the leaders to work together as schools were integrated. Another factor was that students from both schools met the year prior to make decisions about how best to desegregate the schools. Both administrators and students wanted few to no distractions, and Ms. Jay recalled no major excitement or negative events that took place during the year of the desegregation.

In terms of the athletic teams, there was some question about who would start in the school's first integrated football game. There were rumors that white and black students would not play if their friends lost their previously held positions on the team. According to one of the archived interviews, the football coach at the time remembered two African-American students coming to him on game day to tell him that they and their African-American teammates were going to play for him. They believed that he had their best interests at heart and knew that he would do the right thing. Students recalled that the community of Smalltown had mixed feelings about integrating, but because the students and staff at SHS transitioned so smoothly, the community followed suit.

Ms. Cardinal attended both locations of Smalltown High in the 1970s, ninth and tenth at the former NHS, and eleventh and twelfth at SHS, and she did not recall any specific memories about desegregation as an elementary student or middle school student. "There was peace about it. I think why it worked was because whoever designed it had ninth and tenth at North and eleventh and twelfth at Smalltown. So no one could complain about being bused. If you were

going to Smalltown for two years, everyone had to travel the same distance." During our interviews, twice Ms. Cardinal mentioned that the local private school K-12 was also opened in 1971, the same school that tried to recruit Ms. Jay to join the faculty. She believed that was in response to the desegregation; "a lot of people who could afford it and wanted to be separate left." The local private school was still open in 2014 and continued to be primarily an all-white campus.

The desegregation educational reform was the first in a series of changes in education that did not affect Ms. Jay's teaching practices or curriculum. She continued to treat all students the same and held them to the same high expectations as she had done for the previous ten years:

> And I don't remember what we were talking about in class, in literature or something some story we had. And there was some story about moldy bread. And I made a comment, you know one of my comments, 'Oh, moldy bread is okay if you just cover it with peanut butter. You can just eat that piece of bread.' I didn't really think about it. And the next day one of the black girls in the class brought me a loaf of fresh bread and a jar of peanut butter. So I just found me a knife, and I made a peanut butter sandwich for everyone in that class. Those were the days before anyone ate in the classroom (Ms. Jay).

I use this story to end this section because it told a story of how Ms. Jay was accepted as a white teacher by an African-American student. This student was not afraid to break the rules or run the risk of insulting a teacher by bringing her food, but felt comfortable enough with Ms. Jay to join in the humor of the story. Because of the experiences of other school districts in the South, and the preparation that Fletcher County took to prepare for student desegregation, there was little unrest or uprisings when the integration of SHS took place. Ms. Jay did not change her teaching practices or expectations because a new race of students entered her classroom. She was committed to teaching all students regardless of the changes in demographics of the student population, or the changes that continued to occur in education.

With the desegregation of Smalltown High School, the community followed suit during the next few years. Ms. Jay believed that she continued to teach all students equally with high expectations. Seemingly as soon as desegregation fully took effect and teachers and students found a sense of balance in education, the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* was released. The next section sheds some light about the publication of *ANAR* and how the implementation of state standards affected teachers' classroom practices as found in the empirical literature and the teachers in this study**.**

The Nation at Risk and the Era of Standards

For the purpose of this study, I used Tyack and Cuban's (1995) definition of *reform* as "planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems" (p. 4). While *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was a Supreme Court decision and No Child Left Behind (2002) was a law that involved education, I relied on Tyack and Cuban's (1995) definition of reform so that I could include the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) as a reform as well. *ANAR* was a document written to inform American citizens of the perceived problems in American education in the early 1980s. The writers of *ANAR* also included suggestions to solve problems they found, namely the need for standardization in curriculum across the nation, thus leading states to begin creating state standards. The purpose of *ANAR* was to make Americans aware of what was happening to education in the U.S. and to push for change. *ANAR* fits the definition I used for understanding reforms in this study as Luke and Woods (2009) defined policy as "public speech acts, textual bids by bureaucrats, politicians, and governments to shape relations between human subjects, to reorder and distribute material goods, to regulate and govern flows of discourse and the shape of local practices" (p. 197). Though not an official government policy, ANAR functioned as a public speech act that had lasting effects in

schools. I use policy and reform interchangeably because both terms represent efforts to change and shape local practices, such as curriculum and teaching practices found in schools were written to change and shape teaching practices.

An Analysis of *A Nation at Risk*

A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (NCEE, 1983) became a center point of controversy and conversation throughout the U.S. (Eisner, 1992). Written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, chaired by T.H. Bell (U.S. Secretary of Education), this report appealed for new educational reforms. *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) was published in "plain English, with just enough flair to capture the attention of the press" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 24). The report opened with a statement about how educators were not educating students at rigorous levels and how the failing American educational system was threatening the future of the U.S. as a world power. The entire report pointed to the faults of education in the early 1980s and made the claim that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (p. 1). The report was written in a language that a lay audience, including educators and the general public, could understand. When it was released, "national news media featured stories about the crisis in education" (p. 25). At the same time, Gallup Polls grading the public's view on the state of public education reflected a decline of over 15% (from 48% to 31%) in the 10 years following the publication of this document (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This decline could be attributed to *ANAR* (1983) and the media's reaction to it.

One claim made by the writers of *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) was that academic courses offered in schools were weak and did little to offer students the chance to apply the knowledge and skills they were being taught. *ANAR* also noted troubles with curriculum and textbooks

lacking rigor, graduation requirements being low, and teacher preparation not fully preparing teachers for the classroom. According to the Commission, teachers were one of the sources of the problems facing education during the early 1980s. Instruction up to that point had focused on lectures and rote memorization and was full of unambitious curriculum standards (Cohen, 1995).

In addition to pointing out the deficiencies of American education in the 1980s, *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) also provided recommendations to fix these deficiencies. The Commission suggested stricter high school graduation requirements. It listed minimal requirements for coursework completion for each subject along with detailed descriptions of what needed to be included in these stricter courses. It urged more homework for students and a longer school year. The authors of *ANAR* also mentioned teacher education requirements, suggesting that "a better understanding of learning and teaching and the implications of this knowledge for school practices" (p. 8) was one of the tools to effect change.

By including *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) as a pivotal marker in time, like the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, I learned how teachers experienced the outcry against education from the public, and how the implementation of state standards affected their practices and experiences in classrooms. Released just ten years after the desegregation of Smalltown High School, I find it crucial to point out that the claims about American education in failing its citizens occurred just after desegregation had finally been implemented.

In the *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) document, the Commission stated that the U.S. national well-being was at risk, not just education, because expectations were too low. The Commission pointed out that American citizens, who lacked literacy, skills, and training, were not only less likely to be materially successful, but were also less likely "to participate fully in our national

life" (p. 3). This sentiment was similar to that found in the Cardinal Principles (National Education Association of the United States Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918) when those authors called for English education to teach students to be more democratic. *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) was written as a patriotic document calling on U.S. citizens to react to what they called a national crisis.

Words like *risk*, *mediocre*, *disarmament*, and e*roded* stood out on first page of *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983). Not only did these words attempt to frighten the public into thinking about war, but also repeating the word *risk* from title to text assured that a battle was on the horizon if the issues of education were not corrected quickly. The Commission implied a current state of warfare by suggesting a scenario where a foreign power attempts to inflict the current state of education on America, an action they argued the nation would consider "an act of war" (p. 1). Further, the Commission used the language of not only *warfare* but also *patriotism* to excite readers into reacting: America was at risk because the educational system was faltering, and Americans needed to do something about education before the nation's power was lost to foreign countries.

Throughout *ANAR* (1983), the Commission regularly used the pronouns *we* and *us* mixed with concrete nouns such as *American people* or *American citizens* to call attention to the fact that the crisis in education was a national problem. These words served as constant reminders that the report could be read as a patriotic document that called on all American citizens to be concerned with the state of education in America. It was the duty of Americans to take a stand and assist in correcting the problems in education. The statement, "We must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all" (p. 2) reminded readers/Americans that *we* are a part of the solution, and the educational system was a problem for society as a

whole. By stating, “our nation is at risk” (p. 1), the Commission declared that it was not education, students, or society that was at risk but that the nation, the United States of America, that was at risk and on the brink of war with itself (Marshall, 2009).

The latter part of *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) called for change and included a list of tools that were readily available to fulfill the Commission’s suggestions. There was a noticeable shift in the language used in the ending of the publication. No longer were the words negative in connation and denotation. Instead, the authors used positive terms to show what could happen if the American citizens adhered to their suggestions. Words like *commitment*, *care*, *concern*, and *life-long learning* defined the focus of the Commission’s recommendation for action. Commission also relied on words like *American*, c*itizens*, and *we/us* to motivate readers to support recommended changes.

In addition to pointing out the deficiencies of American education in the 1980s, *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) also recommended ways to fix these deficiencies. The Commission argued that education should benefit all: “old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority” (p. 3). The Commission thus suggested stricter high school graduation requirements: four years of mathematics, English, history/US government, and science, and more than two years each of a foreign language and economics or business. Commission posited that the public should expect schools to have higher standards that what was currently accepted. This statement could lead the reader to believe that prior to this publication, educators did not have high expectations from students, and worse yet, educators had settled for the minimum. This call for high standards written with the language of American education in crisis led states to create state standards in multiple subject areas (NCEE).

ANAR (NCEE, 1983) also called for excellence, as defined in three different modes: at the individual level, at the school/college level, and at the societal level. First was that the "individual learner [performs] on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits" (p. 7). The Commission called for students to be pushed to work at higher expectations than they had previously experienced. In other words, they did not want students complacent with their education. The second was that in school or college, excellence "sets high expectations and goals for all learners, [and] then tries to help students to reach them" (p. 7). Schools were to set higher expectations and provide the needed tools for students to reach those expectations. Finally, excellence in society meant that students would "be prepared through the education and skill of its people to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world" (p.8). The Commission argued that one of the ultimate goals of educators should be to prepare citizens to be successful, literate, contributing members of the American society.

A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983) played a major role in the development, approval, and the ultimate implementation of state standards across U.S. schools (Au, 2010; Clarke, Shore, Rhoades, Abrams, Miao, & Li, 2003; Cuban, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Ravitch, 2010; Shanahan, 1991). Within one year of publication, 50 state-level commissions on education were founded in response to the outcry from the public, media, and governmental stakeholders (Au, 2010). The state standards were typically composed of two components: rigor in core subject areas, and state testing that aligned with the standards (Clarke, et al., 2003).

SHS Teachers' Reactions to *ANAR*

Ms. Jay started teaching at Smalltown High School in 1961, 20 years prior to the publication of *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983). Her reaction to this publication was still a vivid memory in 2014. "I remember I bought a book to read because of what I was hearing about it. It was

probably something that we needed to read." While she did not talk about the negativity of the language or the suggestions for reforms, she recognized a call for technology and foreign languages. After reading the *ANAR* document, she had several questions about the authors and the conclusions they made. She wanted to know "when was the last time you taught? When was the last time you stood in a classroom and taught?" She continually asked these questions when a new text came out or a new reform was released.

Ms. Cardinal recalled the media attention and the criticisms that teachers received from the publication of *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983). "I remember all the discussion of how education should change and all that." But as far as the effects of this document on her experiences, she said it did not affect her teaching practices. "I was just pretty much doing what I thought I should do in my classroom." As she continued to discuss the media outcry, Ms. Cardinal pointed out that the media was not as negative towards education and teachers as it was in 2014. She felt like teachers received more criticisms from parents and students because of the negativity in 2014 than they did in the early 1980s when *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) was published.

The Implementation of State Standards

In 1986, the state where I conducted my study implemented a law to ensure that students "develop, in a safe and productive environment, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to reach their fullest potential as individuals and citizens" (State Department of Education, first paragraph, 1986). This law also directed the State Board of Education develop a statewide curriculum. Soon after the law passed, the Board of Education wrote a set of standards and required all educators to use those standards as a foundation for their curriculum. The new standards addressed courses in agriculture, fine arts, foreign language, English for speakers of other languages, health, language arts, mathematics, physical education, reading, science, social

studies, and technology/vocational education (Thomas, 2008). In 1991, the state passed another law that required standardized tests aligned with the standards in five subject areas (English Language Arts, writing, social studies, science, and math) that students had to pass in order to graduate (Zigo, 2001). The English Language Arts exam tested students' ability to answer multiple-choice questions based on reading passages, identifying literary terms, and showing a basic understanding of English punctuation and grammar rules. The writing test based on the state writing standards tested students' writing ability by having the students to write to a standardized prompt.

When creating state standards for high school courses, educators were told to do something new: "to prepare all students for the same academic endpoint" (Siskin, 2004, p. 170). High schools were not originally created with the idea that everyone graduated, let alone meet some specific end such as going to college (Siskin). But with the implementation of standards, it became a requirement that all students take similar courses and meet the same standards to graduate. "Presumably, not only will no child be left behind, all children will run the same course and keep the same minimal pace or else, along with their teachers, be deemed unfit" (Smagorinsky, et al., 2002, p. 187). Smagorinsky, Lakly, and Johnson pointed out that creating a standard curriculum and subsequent test, taken by all students, may actually work against the idea of raising the standards, but instead keep all students and standards at the same level.

While my study provided a look at standards and high stakes testing at two different moments in time marking the beginning of two teachers' careers, Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal, the reality of standards and standardized tests playing out in schools had been a hand-in-hand progression. In other words, with the advent of state standards, the use of standardized tests and the stakes for testing increased, most conversations were not separated into separate items, rather

the issues of standards, testing, and the stakes for both were intertwined. Because of the interrelated nature of the reforms for standards and testing, most of the research I reviewed can be found in the No Child Left Behind (2002) section.

SHS Teacher Experiences with State Standards

The experiences of Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal with the changes that occurred after *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983*)* was published can fit into three combinations: standards, changes in textbooks, and curriculum tools. As the state standards changed, textbooks were rewritten, and scope and sequence documents (curriculum tools) were put into place at each grade level. This loop took place each time the state board of education changed standards. While textbooks were not always rewritten, textbook supplements were purchased as new resources to address the changes in standards. Then scope and sequence documents used internally in the English department were updated to show the additions from the new standards. These three things curriculum—textbooks, and standards--were targets that the Commission wanted to become more rigorous in *A Nation at Risk*. In the rest of this section, I discuss the research related to these areas, and share the narratives about Ms. Jay's and Ms. Cardinal's experiences with the changes that came as a result of *ANAR*.

Standards

At Smalltown High School, Ms. Jay did not seem to have any problems with the implementation of standards. Rather, she welcomed them. Prior to the official state standards being written, she taught what she wanted. "It was my choice." She believed that the standards were created

> for consistency. That [the standard] is not all what I want to teach or what I think the students need, but maybe it is a consistency in punctuation and spelling. Maybe that is the thought. Umm, standard like a mattress size on sheets. We would all get so used to it

> until we understood what is standard. I don't know if anyone has discussed what isn't standard.

Ms. Jay believed what she was already teaching was standard—what was accepted and acceptable in English. After the state standards were written for English, those criteria for curriculum then became the standard. Ms. Jay remarked that what she had been teaching prior to the standards became the standard. In other words, she was teaching what was expected from the state and doing so to what she felt was a high standard of rigor. As she reflected on the reason standards were originally written, she felt strongly that they came from what English teachers were already teaching because each standard followed so closely to what she had been teaching for two decades: "Nobody ever had to tell me to. That is what we always did and nobody had to tell me to. So somewhere along the line, I lined it up right. I don't know how, but then I was very glad to have the standards there for everyone to see." What she taught prior to the standards and after the standards were released did not change. Her understandings of the standards were that she was already teaching them and subsequently did not feel the need to change anything.

Ms. Jay's comments reflected others who believed that the standards were written as a guide for the students, not necessarily as a tool for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Marshall, 2009). She believed that implementing standards gave her more authority in the lessons she was teaching:

> Standards are not worrisome to me. Because if I put the standard up for a discussion for instance, they can read the board. And the standards say you have to learn how to communicate in a group. There is a standard or there is one that is close to that, I can't remember. You have to contribute to the discussion. You have to say something today. So, I don't mind having that standard. I can say [to the students], see that standard right there? You are not fulfilling that standard. So when the rubric comes and you haven't done anything with that standard, you will not have any points for the standard.

Ms. Cardinal felt similarly to Ms. Jay:

> I liked it for the sole reason that it made the kids stand up and say, 'Oh, school is important. Someone outside the school is saying this is important. We need to cover this material.' I think it helped the students focus more and think this [English] was important.

Despite the fact that the English Language Arts standards were written in a language for educators, both of these teachers believed they were written, not only as a checklist, but also as a validation for what they were already teaching in the classroom. Since both teachers had already been teaching what the standards called for, it made sense that they found the standards served as written justification to students about what they had been teaching on a daily basis.

The standards were the official sanctioning of what had been taught for decades at SHS in the English department. When published and mandated for implementation, the state standards reinforced the traditions of the English department's idioculture. By relying on textbooks as their main source of curriculum, the veterans of the English department modeled for incoming faculty members that the textbooks, which served as curriculum tools, were not simply artifacts, but the embodiment of how to teach to the standards.

Textbooks

When teaching in the 1960s and 1970s, Ms. Jay recalled "we had no curriculum, just two books: a grammar and a lit book. I just started at the beginning of the book." The school did not have enough of both books for each student to have both at the same time. Ms. Jay taught grammar with the grammar book for half a year, and then traded the grammar book with the literature book, teaching literature for the other half of the year. In fact Ms. Jay did have a curriculum: It was the textbook. When Ms. Cardinal began teaching in the early 1980s, the English department was still sharing grammar and literature textbooks and still using these as the curriculum for the English classes. She remembered that she had to get creative when teaching using only one textbook at a time because there was so much to teach in so little time. Ms.

Cardinal felt pressure because she wanted to include all the material in each text but could not because of semester-long time constraints. When another English teacher expected to use a text the following semester, Ms. Cardinal had to either teach quickly, or, as she put it, get creative and teach as much of the text as was possible. Because there was no other written curriculum at the time, both Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal taught from the textbooks. They did not question the textbooks; rather they relied on the two textbooks as guides to their curriculum.

The Commission that wrote *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) suggested that textbooks be updated to add more rigorous and challenging material. Once the first state standards were released, the county responded with a new textbook adoption. The new textbooks were written based on the standards. The update meant that the pages were full of standard numbers, graphics, and the inclusion of a wider spectrum of literature. For example, the American literature textbook included literature written by authors from across the world. No longer was it exclusive, American literature written by American authors. Some of these additions troubled Ms. Jay. As previously mentioned, she did not believe that the standards changed what she taught; therefore, this new text both full of graphics (pictures, charts, tables, paintings) and standards was troubling to her. She recalled a story about when the person who worked for the textbook company came by with a notebook full of lessons:

> She said, 'I spent my entire Christmas holidays putting this together for y'all.' And, of course, it was all numbers. You know, it meant that I have to look at these numbers and then I have to look at that list of standards to match the numbers. There were no words. There was not a word about the standard. It was all find the numbers within the standard numbers. I probably still have that notebook somewhere. The textbooks were full of graphics, the pages were busy. And I thought to myself, if a student had a little bit of a headache, these two pages would worry me to death. If I were a student with ADD, I am not sure I could look at these two pages.

Ms. Jay was not confident about the new textbooks the county adopted and wanted to know more about the sellers of the book. She asked one of the three women promoting the books about their

teaching experiences. On the team that visited the county, only one member had taught English, and she had taught it for three years: "So, I let everybody know. The textbook you are teaching from is being sold by an English teacher with three years of experience." Because Ms. Jay did not have access to the editors of the textbooks, she asked about the experiences of the salespeople. Not knowing the background of the editors, but knowing that the salespeople had so little teaching experience bothered her enough to make note of it to her peers. Ms. Jay valued English teachers who had significant years of teaching experience and who stayed in the profession. For her, this saleswoman with only three years teaching English did not garner her respect as an educator or a purveyor of high standards. Ms. Jay thus set the notebook of standards and numbers aside in one of the boxes that lined her classroom walls.

Ms. Jay did not use the literature or grammar textbooks that were adopted ten years ago; rather, she continued to use the ones she used prior to the implementation of state standards. The literature textbook Ms. Jay used had no numbers, standards, or extra visuals that gave her students the headache she mentioned previously. And she continued to use the grammar books that she used since the beginning of her career. When I asked why she used the old textbooks, she explained that there was a shortage of literature books the year after they were adopted. Rather than not being allowed to check out the textbook for each of her students to use at home and thus having only a classroom set of texts, Ms. Jay offered to return her textbooks to the bookroom and used the older textbook. The administration approved her suggestion and since then, she used the older texts. She preferred the stories found in the older textbook to the newer one and had not changed back to the latest adopted textbook adopted in 2005. The grammar textbook that was adopted was rarely used by any of the English department. Most of the

English teachers on this campus relied on old grammar textbooks or consumable grammar workbooks to teach grammar.

In contrast, Ms. Cardinal used the latest literature textbook adopted by the county. She believed that the students liked the graphics, and she did not mind the additions of stories that the newer text included. She did question why some international authors were included in an American literature textbook, but added that she still did not have time to teach everything in the book because of semester-long time constraints.

For Ms. Jay, the new textbooks, full of standards and graphics, were not compatible with what she had been using for about 30 years. She found a way, with administrative approval, to not use the newly adopted textbook that the rest of the English department used. As the leader of the English department idioculture, she used the textbook she preferred, but the rest of the department used the latest adopted textbook. The use of textbooks continued to be the core of the curriculum, not the state standards as the writers of *ANAR* (1983) had envisioned. Ms. Cardinal, like her peers, used the new textbook as a guide and a curriculum. She was comfortable using the new textbook because she believed that students enjoyed the graphics, and it allowed her to more fully participate in the culture of the department because now she had the tools to teach an entire curriculum across the academic year, rather than sharing the textbook with another teacher and condensing her teaching into a single semester. During this same time period following *ANAR,* the English department also developed a scope and sequence curriculum document to serve as an additional curriculum tool that mapped out the use of literature texts across grade levels.

Scope and Sequence as Curriculum Tools

As *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) called for state standards, and state standards were implemented, Fletcher County asked that English teachers from all the three high schools come together to create a document that showed what was being taught, how much time was spent on each topic, and how the topics aligned with the state standards. Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal spent several days over a summer with teachers from the other high schools in the county designing a scope and sequence for each high school grade level in English. The scope and sequence was a curriculum document that included what was being taught for units on grammar, writing, and literature, with an approximation for time limits for each unit, and which standards the units addressed. This document could be considered a tool that *enculturated* English teachers new to SHS to the practices expected of them (Smagorinsky, 2010). The scope and sequence was shared with new teachers as a suggestion of what was considered standard at by other English teachers already apart of the idioculture. While teachers were not required to teach exactly what was on the document, it was used to guide of what was taught in the English classes. Ms. Jay remembered the first planning between English teachers from the three high schools meeting to create this curriculum document:

> In American Lit, it was easy because it was chronological. The hardest part of the scope and sequence was when I had students for 36 or 38 weeks. Or all year long. I could take three days and listen to the *Glass Menagerie* on my record player. And it would take three days with the book for them to read by the book as they listen to the record. And then we would have our big test on the *Glass Menagerie*. And it was four days. And the first time we met to write the scope and sequence, one of the other junior English teachers said, "and I use the last six weeks to teach the *Glass Menagerie*." And I asked, "what would I do for six weeks over the *Glass Menagerie*?" What all do you do?" Well, she strung it out to make it last six weeks. And I said, "You know, I am afraid if you make me do the *Glass Menagerie* for the last six weeks of school, I may have to revolt." So, it was a bit of a compromise on that.

Teachers in the English department from each school had to have conversations and come to some sort of understanding of what was to be taught and for how long. Both teachers, Ms. Jay and her colleague from another school, were teaching the same drama; the discussion concerned the length of time spent teaching *The Glass Menagerie*. Ms. Jay never elaborated on the outcome of this conversation, and I assume some sort of compromise was made regarding the amount of time spend teaching this particular drama. Because my own children took Ms. Jay's class, I know that she did not spend more than a week teaching *The Glass Menagerie*. But, because I did not know who the other teacher was in this narrative, I did not know what the final compromise was between the two teachers. In this conversation among the English faculty members in the county, Ms. Jay positioned herself as the veteran teacher. She offered to revolt if she had to teach for the length of times suggested by the colleague. There was no evidence of compromise per say in that the length of time my children spent on the play with Ms. Jay reflected her original position, but there was evidence of how Ms. Jay used her seniority and years of experience to influence how other teachers in Fletcher County taught.

Ms. Cardinal believed that the function of the scope and sequence was a guide for teachers: "Today it is expected that teachers follow it much more closely, but, when we first created it, there was more freedom. I could work around it." She felt much more pressure to change her plans to follow the scope and sequence during the 2013-2014 school year than she ever had before. When the scope and sequence was initially created in the early 1990s, it was not a document to be followed unwaveringly. The loose way in which it was enforced allowed Ms. Jay to spend a week on a play, while another teacher spent more time if she chose.

Earlier I mentioned that a defining characteristic and purpose of English classes was to teach meaning (Kress, 2005). This focus on meaning making allowed English teachers to have

more choice in which literature texts were taught and how long was spent on each unit. While the English teachers at SHS were expected to use the scope and sequence, they also had the freedom to move at a pace and order that best fit the students they taught.

The scope and sequence was created in response to a county request. For the English teaches at SHS, the scope and sequence had become a cultural artifact that the teachers used for multiple reasons. It was a guide for teachers, and it also helped to clarify what was being taught at SHS vertically. By sharing this document with each grade level, teachers knew what students learned the previous year, and what they were expected to learn in the following year. Sharing the document cut down on multiple grades teaching the same stories or grammar lessons. With a wealth of literature that could be used in each grade level, English teachers could get very territorial over what they taught. For example, if tenth grade English classes had always taught *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and a new ninth grade teacher used it in his/her class, students might read the same book twice in two years' time. According to the traditions in this department, English teachers argued that this ruined the element of surprise in a text, and had the potential to bore students if lessons were repeated from one year to the next. Another issue that became problematic was that twelfth grade teachers expected that students had already read and studied Shakespeare in tenth grade. The senior level teacher may not have gone into as much detail in Shakespeare's biography because she expected the students to be familiar with his background because he was on the scope and sequence in tenth grade. Ms. Jay recalled a story about one such teacher who taught American literature and was clearly not following the guidelines of the scope and sequence. She went into the copy room and saw the teacher making stacks of copies using large amounts of paper:

> I thought a minute and said, "Wow you are way ahead of your lessons aren't you?" And she said, "I can't stand the poetry in that literature book, so I am just making my own

> poetry unit." And I said, "Well, you know, we have something called scope and sequence, and next year, the senior English teachers will have expected them to have read some of these things in junior lit." And I said, "you had better get with our curriculum principal and make sure." And then I made a comment that "I think our textbooks are full of beautiful poetry."

This quote was important because it showed that the scope and sequence also shaped the vertical alignment of the English curriculum at SHS. Using the scope and sequence as a curriculum tool guided teachers toward what should be taught in their individual classes, as well as what would be taught in all of the other classes across grade levels. This vertical approach to curriculum further reinforced the idioculture of the department in which traditions matter. Veteran teachers continued to teach in ways that they always. Changes to the curriculum at any level were not necessarily welcome or implemented with the result being a set of textbooks and a scope and sequence document functioning as the guiding force in the curriculum. The standards were present, but did not function as the guide for decision-making about what and how to teach as much as the textbooks, the scope and sequence document, and the department traditions did.

The introduction of state standards led to few changes in Ms. Jay's and Ms. Cardinal's teaching. As state standards were being implemented across the country, just some of the recommendations from *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) were realized. It was not until No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was passed in 2002 that *ANAR's* recommendations were more fully realized with a call for high stakes standardized tests to be used as an accountability system for schools and curriculum across the nation. In the next section, I explore in the implementation of NCLB, the studies that examined teachers' experiences with standardized testing, and how the teachers at SHS experienced NCLB (2002) and the incoming era of accountability.

No Child Left Behind and the Era of Accountability

Congress passed and President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in January 2002. While the purposes of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and NCLB (2002) were very different, equality was an important outcome of each. In *Brown v. Board* (1954), the judges were mandating equal education for all students. In NCLB (2002), legislation required accountability for schools through standardized testing presumably assuring that all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio=economic status, were taught to the same high standards in all schools. By requiring annual passing percentages, states were required to create tests that would prove that all students were getting an equal education. While equality was a goal for each of these documents, the difference between the two could be found when employing the term equity. Equity was provided when those who were lagging behind because of a disadvantage, whether culturally, financially, physically, or demographically, were given more and different resources to ensure equality was taking place. NCLB called for added services to be provided for students so that everyone was taught equitably. These services could be created for special education students through IEPs, for struggling students through extra tutoring, and/or ESL students through additional language support classes. In section 1111 of NCLB, Congress mandated that "students are taught the same knowledge and skills in such subjects and held to the same expectations as are all children" (p 3). Here legislation provided what was expected by each state to ensure that students were being taught equally and that no child was being left behind, thus calling for equity to ensure equality: an inherent in contradiction. The law said give students what they need. And, at the same time, test them in a standardized way. The first part called for equity; the second part ignores that equity in favor of enforcing that all students perform the same on the same tests within the state.

An Analysis of No Child Left Behind

NCLB (2002) was based on four basic principles: increased accountability, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and teaching methods based on a "gold standard" of research (Luke & Woods, 2009). This law required states to create rigorous standards in reading and mathematics for several primary and secondary grade levels. Like *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983), NCLB (2002) called for rigorous standards in public education. One way to interpret these reforms was to see *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983) as the catalyst for reform, and NCLB (2002) as the call to action by mandating through federal law for standardized tests to accompany reading and mathematics standards. The law required states to create an accountability system to ensure that all students were meeting the standards designed by each state. Secondary schools had their own set of additional requirements in NCLB: targets for teacher quality and training, graduation and dropout rates, and attendance, as well as required testing.

Each state was required to create standardized tests aligned to its standards to provide a baseline for each school to be graded a process that resulted in a new accountably measure called Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP was designed to ensure that schools were meeting the set standards. The AYP report measure was based on standardized test scores, absentee records, and graduation rates at every secondary school, as well as performance on other objectives listed by each state. The law furthers required students to be tested and their scores broken up into subgroups based on race, socio-economic class, special education status, and English language proficiency. Schools not reaching each proficiency rate in every subgroup based on state and federal guidelines were placed on the "Needs Improvement" list for the following year. This Needs Improvement title placed schools in a process that led to potential loss of federal funding

or the redistribution of money from the federal government to be used for tutoring, transportation, or other services depending on regulations from state authorities (Au, 2010). Likewise, the Needs Improvement list used public shaming tactics as a punishment for not meeting the expectations set forth in the legislation (Popham, 2003).

In the state where my study took place, if a secondary school did not meet the minimal requirements of test scores, attendance rates, and graduation rates, the school did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (State Department of Education website). If a school did not make AYP for two consecutive years, that school was put on the Needs Improvement list. Parents of students attending a Needs Improvement school could then opt to send their children to a higher performing school or to receive supplemental services that included tutoring or remedial classes in mathematics, reading, and language arts (State Department of Education website).

The major goal of NCLB (2002) was to have states demonstrate 100% proficiency rates in all subject areas by every student in every subgroup at every public school by the year 2014. This meant that every student in every school across the country must pass all the tests given by the states by 2014. Yet, reaching 100% proficiency was unattainable and did more to "more to dishearten educators than to motivate them (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). And with the proficiency percentages rising each year, according to the scores, schools were performing more poorly every year (Linn et al.). In 2004 in the state where this study takes place, 79.4% of the state schools made AYP. In 2011, that number was down to 72.7% (State Department of Education website). The irony was that schools were performing better than the previous years, but the gain in passing students was not at the current, rising rates required each year by the federal legislation.

With the 2013-2014 school year fast approaching in 2010, federal and state leaders realized that 100% proficiency in all schools for all grade levels and all students was not an achievable goal. Ravitch (2010; Stanford Education, 2010) argued that lawmakers knew from the start that this law could never be fully realized. With this realization, federal leaders created opt-out plans for states that had requirements for creating accountability assessments for teachers, in addition to students.

One of the main purposes of NCLB (2002) was to motivate teachers to do their jobs better:

> NCLB policies assume that teachers can be led to perform better if they are made much more accountable for test scores gains, and that sanctions directed at their schools and, eventually, at them, will motivate teachers to improve their instruction. (Sunderman, Tracy, Kim, & Orfield, 2004, p. 6)

In my experiences of teaching in several states, I have been a part of many conversations with teachers talking about the unfairness of government expectations and the tests. Educators not only questioned the measurement of a student's learning for an entire year on a single test that they did not create, but they also questioned the fairness of teacher evaluations being based on student performance on that same test. One of the aims of this study was to understand teachers' experiences with performing their jobs with the implementation of standardized tests and accountability procedures mandated by NCLB legislation. Interestingly, the SHS teachers spoke less about standardized testing than they did about student desegregation and curriculum standards that result from the first reforms I discussed.

Section 1111: State Plans for NCLB

When looking for a section in NCLB (2002) that explained the expected role of teachers in this 700 page document, I was dumbfounded. There was no section specifically written in regard to the expectations of teachers that I could locate. The law was written in a language that

was not easily accessible to an educator; with so many sections, subsections, and numbered sections, I, as a proficient, adult reader and teacher of English for 14 years with five years of reading educational research while working on a Ph.D. was easily lost when attempting to understand the requirements of the states and teachers in those states. I thus narrowed my search to teacher preparation. This search led me to sections about the military and teacher grants that were related to teacher preparation programs, and information about alternative avenues a person might take to become a teacher. There was nothing explicitly about teachers and what they needed to do to prepare for and/or do in order to meet the requirements of this legislation.

I then turned my search to focus on schools. I thought that if I could locate information about what was expected from schools, then, maybe, I might find what was expected of the teachers. This search led me to Section 1111, State Plans. This section focused on state standards written to challenge student achievement, standardized tests to align to the rigor of the state standards, annual yearly progress to show growth, and 100% passing rates in all groups and subgroups of the standardized assessments by 2014.

SHS Teachers' Reactions to NCLB

I found that the SHS teachers had very little knowledge about the NCLB (2002) law other than the basic understanding that a standardized test would determine whether students were being promoted to the next grade level. All three teachers had heard about NCLB through the media and "all the hoopla in the news and the criticisms that we were getting," (Ms. Cardinal) but none had any direct experiences with the actual document passed by Congress. "It had no relevance to me" (Ms. Robbins) was the general consensus of the group. Because of the lack of stories about NCLB shared by the teachers, I gathered that there was very little discussion about passing of the law throughout the hallways and classrooms of Smalltown High School.

One story Ms. Jay told showed that she understood NCLB (2002) required teachers to allow students more time and more chances to pass a class: "I know that probably if a child had long enough, he can learn something. So that he is not left behind." This quote referenced one of the ways SHS met the requirement of providing services to all students to ensure equity: extra opportunities to learn specifically, students were allowed to retake failed course tests, retake failed classes via a computer program, and/or retake failed standardized tests. According to Ms. Jay, the word *accountability* had taken on a new meaning. While schools and subsequently, teachers, were held accountable to provide for and to prove equal student learning, students were not held accountable but were instead given multiple chances to pass. All students, not just those who needed the extra opportunity for extending learning because of disabilities, demographics, or culture, were provided services. While Ms. Jay, Ms. Cardinal, and Ms. Robbins did not discuss the extra services provided, they did share their disgust with how many opportunities a student had to pass a class, or standardized test as a result of NCLB. They believed that students were not being held accountable, as schools were, but were given too many opportunities to pass.

In the following section, I review the research that relates to teachers' experiences with standardized testing. As I review the literature, I include the narratives of the teachers as they relate to other teachers' experiences.

Standardized Testing Studies

In a survey of literature to find how high stakes testing controlled curriculum, Au (2007) discovered that findings from a large body of research was seemingly contradictory when understanding how high stakes testing affected classroom practices. In his metasynthesis review of 49 studies that fit into his search of "curriculum" and "high-stakes testing" in K-12

classrooms, Au found three experiences of control that high stakes testing had over curriculum: content, pedagogic, and formal. I explain each control experience as I review the literature.

I reviewed each of the 49 studies that Au (2007) analyzed in his metasynthesis, looking specifically for secondary English teachers' experiences with high-stakes testing that included teacher narratives. I found only four that included high school English teachers (Anagnostopolous, 2003; Smagorinsky, et al., 2002; Wolf & Wolf, 2002; Wollman-Bonilla, 2004), and nine studies that focused on high school history teachers (Gerwin, & Visone, 2006; Gradwell, 2006; Grant, 2003; Grant, et al., 2002; Landman, 2000; Libresco, 2005; Smith, 1991; van Hover, 2006; & van Hover & Heinecke, 2005). The rest of the 36 studies were either focused more on curriculum and less on teachers or were elementary-based studies. I continued my search for studies about high school English teachers' experiences with educational reforms by mining the resources and references with the 13 studies from Au (2007). Using the three areas of control as section headings, in the following I summarize what I found and how my teachers fit in with these notions of control.

Content Control

Au's (2007) survey of the literature showed changes were made to the content of curriculum as a result of NCLB (2002), mostly in that teachers were teaching to the test. Content control became a factor as language arts teachers narrowed their curriculum in order to teach only what was on the test to ensure that students were fully prepared. According to studies on teachers' experiences with high stakes testing, researchers found that teachers were not changing *how* they taught, but they were changing *what* they taught in terms of state testing (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003; Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998; Herman, 2004; Jones, et al, 1999; Luna & Turner, 2001; Segall, 2003). Abrams and colleagues

(2003) and Anagnostopoulos (2003) found that the teachers in their studies were adding more content found on the test and taking away content not included on the tests. When Luna and Turner (2001) spoke with teachers about the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the teachers felt that they had not changed their teaching practices other than adding or subtracting minor units based on the tests. One participant, Harry, explained, "MCAS preparation is something I've been doing in my class since I began teaching. We want kids to write well, speak well, read well…know what they've read, and be able to use it" (p. 82). Segall's (2003) interviews with teachers about their perceptions of Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) elicited similar responses. Segall also found that teachers used the state test as a structure and a guide to their curriculum. Firestone et al. (1998) studied mathematics teachers in Maine and Maryland. These researchers found that teachers changed the order of what was taught, but did not change how they taught the material. Furthermore in a national survey of 4,000 teachers, Abrams, et al. (2003) found that those educators surveyed in high stakes testing states spent the most time during class instruction on what would be tested.

Ms. Jay, Ms. Cardinal, and Ms. Robbins' experiences were similar to the participants found in Luna and Turner's (2001) study. All three felt that they were already teaching what was on the test and did not have to change much in order for their students to pass. Each stated in one way or another that they had been teaching what they taught for decades with small additions here and there. The few practices they altered were adding practice warm up questions or making sure research methods were taught each semester. I argue that they were also similar to Segall's (2003) participants because they made sure that they included what was on the test, but did not mention that they stopped teaching anything because it was not on the test. While they did not completely change their curriculum in relation to the implementation of NCLB (2002),

the teachers added to what they previously taught because of standardized testing. The teachers each felt strongly that the test did not dictate what they taught in their classroom, but included subject matter that they knew would appear on the standardized test. "English is still English" (Ms. Cardinal) was a mantra on which all three teachers agreed.

Pedagogical Control

In his review of NCLB (2002) effects in schools, Au (2007) found that many teachers changed their pedagogy from student-centered instruction to teacher-centered instruction thus giving the high-stakes tests some control over their beliefs about education. Likewise, Abrams and colleagues (2003) found that over 63% of teacher participants found that "their state testing program has led them to teach in ways that contradict their own notions of sound educational practice" (p. 23). The teachers in my study aligned with the minority opinion in this content experience. Not one of the three teachers' felt that the high stakes, standardized tests in English aligned with their grade level had any effect on their pedagogical beliefs. Each of these teachers believed themselves already to be a mixture of teacher-centered and student-centered educators. There were times when lecture was the best method for their practices (teacher-centered), but all three also included student-centered projects, group work, and student-led discussions (student-centered). Their pedagogy did not change because they already employed a combination of teaching methods and were comfortable with both types of practices. Other findings related to pedagogic control were not focused on student versus teacher-centered practices, but on frustrations or desires to leave the field of teaching as found in Seely Flint et al. (2001) study.

Seely Flint and colleagues (2011) wrote an article and a subsequent book chapter (Seely Flint et al., 2013) about what had happened to six teachers when educational reforms and NCLB (2002) in particular entered their classrooms. In their stories, teachers and students struggled

because of the negative impacts that came with reforms, including scripts for teachers and mounds of paperwork that were required for each student to receive special services as called for in NCLB. One of the six teachers resigned from her position rather than be forced to use a scripted reading program that her school implemented. Another teacher watched, hopelessly, as a student was not receiving tutoring services because the teacher had not "graphed the appropriate behavior intervention" (Seely Flint et at., 2011, p. 14), despite collecting sixteen weeks of data about his struggling reading skills. Yet another teacher stood her ground and fought with administration to have a student tested for special education courses, and the student was eventually placed in the needed special education course. The authors of these studies shared powerful experiences that each had as a result of educational reforms. I included these studies in my narrative because it was important to note how other teachers have experienced educational reforms that were not as positive as the teachers at SHS.

Because of my understanding of the Seely Flint (2011) study, I expected the teachers in my study to have had similar reactions. I was misguided. None of the teachers in my study shared in the almost violent or upsetting experiences. As I reviewed my transcripts, I realized that this may be because the teachers in my study have been teaching for over 20 years, while the teachers in the Seely Flint study did not have as many years of teaching experience. Zancanella's (1992) findings confirmed my conclusion. In his study, Zancanella found that testing was related to instructional practices according to the degree of power teachers had in experience, status, and position related to the school dynamics. That is, teachers with many years of experience, high status in the school, and in positions of power related to the school dynamics could and did resist changing their instruction when testing became a higher stakes practice. The teachers in my study have decades of experience, are all considered veteran

teachers by their peers, and two of three hold positions of power (Ms. Robbins as a grade level lead teacher, and Ms. Jay as the department chair). This study confirmed that that veteran teachers with over 20 years of classroom experience may not react as new teachers do to mandates because they have seen so many educational reforms come and go.

Formal Control

Au (2007) found in areas where high stakes testing took place, teachers had a "fragmentation of knowledge" (p. 262). Fragmentation meant that teachers taught in small, fragmented units based on the standardized test, not in complete units that they might have taught prior to the era of standardized testing. The teachers in this study did not discuss or allude to having to teach in fragments because of the standardized tests. Rather they used the textbooks and scope and sequence documents as curriculum guides. Because the test was not worrisome to them, it did not play a large role in their teaching of units, large or small. Two factors that made it possible for the teachers to continue to teach within the cultural traditions of the school included the power of 20 plus years of teaching for both Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal to influence other teachers and administrators and their confidence in their teaching to resist the lure of teaching to the test.

All three of my teachers practiced full control (content, pedagogical, and formal) of what they taught in their classrooms and did not allow the standardized tests to dictate what they taught. This autonomy may be attributed to the fact that they have been teaching for decades, and to their confidence in their curriculum and abilities to teach. This control of the curriculum may also be attributed to the culture of the school. Smalltown High never placed a large amount of pressure on teachers to teach to the test but, rather, allowed teachers the freedom to teach as they felt was necessary for students. By exercising their own control over the curriculum and

teaching, teachers at SHS helped students to achieve the AYP expectations nearly every year. The school's achievement data on standardized tests showed that in ten years of AYP requirements under NCLB, SHS only once did not make the AYP mark. That status came as a result of a small number of students within one sub-group who did not pass the exams.

Testing Culture and Its Effects

I include a review of the literature that had to do with testing culture because culture is one of the frameworks that lay the foundation for this study. It was important to understand that testing had become a culture in itself across the U.S. and a review of the literature will assist the reader in grasping the full effects of the testing culture found in the American educational system.

Costigan (2002) found the culture of high-stakes testing in schools was not being addressed with preservice educators in their education classes. He interviewed and observed six elementary teachers during their first year in the classroom and found that preservice teachers were shocked and frightened by this culture that they did not know existed. "It seemed clear that they continued to have difficulty negotiating between what they saw as personal best practice, the best practice advocated in their education courses, and the type of test-based curriculum demanded of them by school supervisors" (p. 30). There was a contradiction between the three of these practices. While they believed that their own personal best practices could be interwoven into best practices learned in their methods' classes, both personal and university best practices challenged what the teachers found in the testing culture of schools. And the teachers in Costigan's study became conflicted about identifying what, then, best practices were, because their experiences in classrooms were so different from what they expected. They also reported that they wished testing had been a larger part of their education coursework. Costigan

suggested that teacher education programs needed to incorporate curriculum conversations about high-stakes testing and the established testing culture.

Zigo (2003) further provided evidence of the testing culture when he observed and interviewed three English Language Arts teachers who were "resisting the strategy of 'teaching to the test' (Jones et al., 1999) to obtain high passing rates" (p. 215). She wanted to learn how English teachers at a high school maintained control of their practices when the administration was more focused on the state tests and how these teachers explained a higher passing rate than neighboring schools with similar demographics. Zigo found several factors that influenced how these teachers taught English: reflective practice, collaborating, and making writing relevant. One teacher in this study reflected that after her first year of teaching, she had a 98% passing rate and she felt she was a good teacher, as did her administration. However, after a few years of experience, the teacher realized that good teaching did not mean good test scores; rather, good teaching was helping students to "understand who they are and their place in the world." (p. 222). This shift in thought process may be attributed to the culture of testing in her school. As a new teacher, she felt that high-test scores meant that she was a good teacher because that was the outcome that fit well with the testing culture. But she found that what was valued in the testing culture contradicted with her own beliefs, and the beliefs of other English teachers in her department.

The testing culture that created pressure cooker conditions at other schools (Costigan, 2002) was not a part of the SHS English department idioculture. The teachers had a sense of security knowing that their practices and curriculum artifacts had been used with success for decades. The teachers knew that their practices were working because the test scores continued to pass the required score thresholds. Likewise, new teachers in the department did not feel

pressure to teach to the test because that was not a part of the culture of the school or the department.

Loss of Instructional Time

A common characteristic that came out during my study, but was not discussed in any of the previous studies notated in this dissertation, was the loss of instructional time. Because of all the testing that came with NCLB, classroom time was lost to prepare for and administer those tests:

> We had to give the graduation test and the end-of-course tests. And then everyone took the ASVAB [Armed Services vocational Aptitude Battery]. And all juniors had to take the PSAT. When half the class is gone, you have to stop and find something to do for ninety minutes. So that has been interference.

As Ms. Jay told this story during the group interview, both Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal nodded in agreement. While they did not verbally add to her complaint about the amount of time lost to standardized tests, they seemed to be in agreement with her. The problem here was not narrowing the curriculum to teach to the test (Popham, 2003), but the issue was the amount of instructional time lost for the administration of tests. These teachers did not have to alter their teaching practices to meet the demands of each test, but they did have to alter the time they spent teaching to make room for all the out-of-class time for students to take the tests. While standardized testing may have some unseen or as yet unaccounted for effects in the classrooms, the SHS teachers' stories clearly showed that testing diminished the amount of time they had to teach students.

Highly Qualified Teachers

One of the requirements of NCLB (2002) was that all core subject area teachers had to be "highly qualified." Core subject areas only included ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. Prior to this law, there was some common understanding that teachers sometimes taught

classes in subjects other than the field in which they were prepared. For example, a certified English teacher may have taught English and social studies because of teacher shortages or budget cuts. According to the new law, teachers were required to "hold a bachelor's degree, hold a regular or full state-approved teaching certificate or license, and demonstrate competency in each of the academic subjects she teaches" (Ingersoll & Curran, 2004, p. 3) in order to be considered highly qualified. Teachers were qualified as competent if they had a degree in the field they were teaching, passed a state teaching test on the subject, had a graduate degree in the field of education, or met other state mandated methods. By 2005-2006, states had to report that 100% of its core academic teachers were highly qualified. Veteran and novice teachers alike were required to prove that they were highly qualified.

Ms. Jay had to prove that she was a highly qualified teacher because she had a state approved lifetime certificate for teaching English in grades 6-12. A lifetime certificate meant that she did not have to retest regularly or take professional development courses to update her teaching certificate. In order to show her competency, she had to fill out a form to show that she was highly qualified even though she had been teaching English for over 40 years when this law was passed. She expressed frustration when recalling this event, and she told this story not only in the individual interview but also in the group conversation:

> When No Child Left Behind came out, I had the life certificate. I had to fill out a form to prove that I was qualified. And there was a points' column. And this is how I was judged. How many times had I been a national teacher of the year? How many times had I been a Georgia teacher of the year? How many times had I been a district teacher of the year? How many times had I been the teacher of the year at Smalltown High School? How many times had I, on the state level, presented at a conference? How many times on a national level and then the state level and on down? How many workshops had I gone to in one year? And I said to my assistant principal at the time, "This whole thing to tell me whether or not I am qualified takes me out of the classroom." And I said, "and then, there is a problem. Do you know how many school systems there are in this state? And how many English teachers I would have to compete against be the national teacher of the year?" And I said, "So to be qualified is someone

> who was a national teacher of the year or state teacher of the year, then someone is going to have to change some rules, somewhere." The workshops had to be within a certain date. So that means that the more workshops I had been to in one year, the more points I got.

While Ms. Jay ultimately earned enough points to be highly qualified with her lifetime certificate, she was still frustrated about the criteria that determined the points. I asked her what she thought a more appropriate evaluation to be to determine whether or not she was highly qualified. She responded, "A person who sits in this classroom every day for an hour and a half for every class, then that somebody might be able to evaluate me." She did not feel a form with a point system on it could encompass what was needed to evaluate her teaching as highly qualified or not. Ms. Cardinal and Ms. Robbins did not have to prove that they were highly qualified, because they had met the teaching criteria set forth by the state. Their state certifications came with requirements for continuing education that fit with the mandates for NCLB for highly qualified teachers.

When teachers believed their teaching practices were already aligned to the educational reforms, they did not alter their practices. State standards validated what Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal had been teaching for years, but this part of NCLB (2002) questioned Ms. Jay's qualifications. The reform penetrated the culture of this department, and Ms. Jay was angered by having to prove her value. Ms. Jay told this story several times both individually and in the group interview. Despite the fact that she began teaching at a time that state issued lifetime certificates, she felt like she had to prove her value. Her years in the classroom were not considered in determining her highly qualified status, rather, time spent out of the classroom or awards won were valued.

Other than a few outliers (adding warm-up activities, including curriculum found on the test, and instructional time lost to standardized tests), very little changed in SHS teachers' practices with the passing of NCLB (2002) and the implementation of accountability measures based on standardized tests. Ms. Cardinal reflected that the standardized test that her students were required to take "was just a basic test;" as she put it, "we were already teaching above and beyond that." Ms. Robbins said, "I just kept doing what I was doing because I was already teaching research skills and grammar skills as well as the literary devices and we did reading. The way I teach, I just kept doing it and it was working." Ms. Jay continued to teach as she had been doing for 50 years, and her students passed, often exceeded the standardized test passing scores. Teaching to the tests was not necessary for these three educators to know that their students were well prepared for the test. Rather, they taught what they had always taught prior to this accountability reform and relied on their understandings of curriculum, teaching, and students to teach what was needed for individual student success in their classes on the tests.

In the following chapter, I explain why these findings matter for understanding in regard to educational reforms, teacher experiences, and what was happening at Smalltown High School.

CHAPTER 5

RESOLVING THE ISSUE OF WHAT HAPPENS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

> Basic teaching techniques have also been extremely slow to change.
> (Lortie, 2002, p. 23)

In this dissertation, I laid out the stories of three teachers and three educational reforms. Because of the rhetoric that the media and legislators use about the dire straits in education and the need for immediate reforms to fix what ails schools, I think it is important to take stock of what has been done. Three teachers at Smalltown High School taught through decades of reforms that should have, on the face of it, changed their teaching each time the reform was mandated. The reality was that when the bell rang and the classes began, the teaching in 2014 looked much like it did in the 1960s. The textbooks changed, the racial and ethnic representation of students became more diverse, digital technological tools became part of the everyday experience; but the teachers were still white, middle class, female professionals who went to work each day with high expectations for teaching literature, writing, and grammar. They used the influx of standards to justify what they taught. They paid little heed to the increasingly higher stakes for standardized testing, while lamenting some of the time lost to the administration of those tests. Ultimately, they taught students with equality, but they did so while also not acknowledging the role that race could have played in their teaching practices. Their experiences can also model for incoming new teachers how veteran teachers make choices within the specific cultures of the schools.

A Culture of Standards

Marshall (2004) wrote extensively about standards and how the English standards were originally written by an NCTE sponsored group. I found it interesting that he went into great detail about how the first standards developed, by discussing the multiple meetings, agendas, and

attendees who contributed. The irony for the teachers in this study was their beliefs that they were already teaching the standards without the need for written standards from the state or the national collective of teachers of English. Marshall further explained that standards were seldom based on evidence, and pointed to questions about whether standards affected student learning at all. The SHS teachers noted that the standards did nothing for students and instead served as a justification for their teaching practices. As the standards were rewritten and altered over the past 20 years, all three teachers pointed out that they still taught the same curriculum from the same textbooks, but they used the language of the new standards on the classroom boards to appease school administration and state leaders.

A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983) called for standards to battle what the authors saw as a lack of rigor in the American public education system in the early 1980s. Two of the three teachers in this study believed that the state standards were written as a justification for what they had been teaching. Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal remarked that the standards were so closely aligned to what they did that standards simply served as an explanation to prove to students why they taught as they did. Interestingly, they never spoke of the standards as a justification for showing administrators or other teachers for their practices, despite the fact that standards were written for a professional educator audience. For example, if Ms. Cardinal had the students make presentations to the class, and one of the students asked why they had to present in an English class, Ms. Cardinal could point to the standard that called for students to orally present their work. Ms. Jay wrote a standard on the board each day. When or if a student questioned an assignment, she pointed to the standard and said, "That is why we are doing this." The irony in this line of thinking is that the standards are written in a language for teachers, not for students, and were proposed as curriculum tools to guide teacher thinking, planning, and professionalism.

If standards were written for students, the language would have been quite different and more accessible to students.

While these veteran teachers felt confident that they were already teaching to the standards in the 1980s and 1990s, new teachers, such as Ms. Robbins and myself, felt that the standards were written as guidelines for what to teach. While Ms. Robbins used the standards to direct decisions about teaching, Ms. Cardinal and Ms. Jay continued to draw on the decades of experience they had and the curriculum laid out in English textbooks. Because Ms. Robbins had not taught prior to the implementation of state standards, she used the standards as direction (along with the accepted English artifacts of traditions and textbooks used in the school's culture) for what to include in the curriculum. But using the standards in this way can also be troublesome.

One concern was that the English standards incorporated broad, open-ended language. There was little specificity that told teachers exactly what to teach. Rather, the standards had lists of and other terms like plot, imagery, theme, and figurative language. The questions from new teachers included: Which figurative language do I teach? What about theme? How do I deal with imagery? Imagery in poetry only or imagery found in all written genres? Does imagery include art? The standards were not specific enough to act as a clear, precise guide for what exactly to teach (Eisner, 2002). This ambiguity in both the standards as curriculum guide and the need for a new teacher to follow it led me to ask: What was the standard in English classes?

In the early 1990s, standards had greater specificity, listing particular topics to be required in the curriculum (i.e., comma splice, narrative writing, Freytag's plot line), and teachers could use the standards as a check list, like a grocery list of items to include throughout

a year of teaching. For example, I know what I buy each week at the grocery store, but having a list in my hand that I can use to cross off each item, gives me confidence that I purchased everything on the list. Ms. Jay and Cardinal felt similarly about the more precisely written standards. Both Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal appreciated the more exact and detailed language found on these standards than any other collection of standards that have since been passed down by the state. Even though both believed that they already were teaching what was found in the standards, they agreed that being able to check off specific topics made it easier to ensure that they taught everything on the list.

As the standards changed in the past 20 years, all three teachers acknowledged the presence and relative importance of standards to their teaching practices. During the course of this study, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were implemented. CCSS have now been written, released, and are being used in schools. With 47 of the 50 states adopting these standards, the federal measurement of schools will be changing. The CCSS reform and the accompanying opt-out plan for Race to the Top (RTT) funding were not included in this study because, as of this writing, the effects are just unfolding. This set of standards and federal education reform was shaping into a more significant impact on what the teachers were teaching, more so than previous state standards because these new standards required teachers to change their practices for the first time in their careers. Moving from *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) to the implementation of state standards after *ANAR* (NCEE, 1983), I see a common pattern in the wave of educational reforms within the confines of these teachers' classrooms: very little has changed in their practices.

A Culture that Resisted Testing

Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on the reader's views about NCLB (2002), there was not much to discuss when it came to No Child Left Behind and the implementation of standardized testing to determine school accountability. The teachers at SHS had little to say about the effects of this law. Not only did they not pay much attention to NCLB, but they also were not overly concerned about standardized testing or the high stakes attached to it. All three have come to expect testing, but they continued to teach as they had for decades.

No Child Left Behind (2002) required students to read on grade level by third grade, and to pass proficiency tests created by each state for promotion to the next grade level or graduation. Furthermore formulas for school performance factored several elements: scores on standardized, statewide tests, attendance, and graduation rates, among other standards, all of which required specific breakdowns for categories of students by ability, gender, ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status. Yet, at Smalltown, three English teachers did not flinch in the face of the standardized tests required in their subject area. Maybe because the English tests were typically centered on reading comprehension and grammar skills, the teachers gave little focus in their classrooms on these tests. The relative ease with which students seemed to perform on the tests indicated a possible relationship between the vagueness of state standards after 2001 and the tests that focused on reading and grammar identification skills. If standards were broad and unspecific, the tests were likely to follow suit. The teachers complained about the amount of time testing had taken from their daily teaching practices, but they did not otherwise alter their practices in order to ensure their students would pass the tests. In fact, they believed that if they taught the curriculum as they had done so for decades, their students were likely to pass because, as Ms. Cardinal said, "English is still English." Statements like this indicated that the teachers

found long lasting and unchanging aspects of English teaching to be hallmarks of what they did every day when the bell rang and the classroom door closed. Evidence that supported their beliefs about teaching and testing was in the school's testing record: SHS met all of the requirements for English every year without fail.

"Teaching to the test" was not only *not* a conversation among these teachers, but they also could not teach to the test because they were not allowed to see it. That is, the state required that in order to maintain the fidelity of the standardized tests, all certified teachers proctored the test and were specifically required to not read the test, discuss any aspect of the test, or answer questions from students. The only thing teachers could do in the proctoring role was monitor students for cheating, and read aloud the directions verbatim. In past studies, two groups of teachers emerged: those teachers who taught only what was on the test and those who taught the content and trusted that students would do well on the test without specific preparation (Abrams, et al., 2003; Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Zancanella, 1992). All three SHS teachers stood on the same side of that dividing line. Not one of them talked at length about standardized tests; none of them seem to be afraid of the tests. All three teachers saw standardized testing as something that was expected, and continued to teach as they saw fit.

The NCLB (2002) legislation was passed over a decade ago, perhaps with the intent to scare teachers into performing at a different or higher level but had "no personal relevance" for them, as Ms. Robbins declared. Not only did NCLB and the standardized testing that subsequently became part of the yearly experiences for these teachers not get in the way of what they taught, they were not even fazed by it. The changes that took place in their classrooms had less to do with reforms and more to do with changes in society, such as technology and the implementation of block scheduling.

Missing Cultural Differences

Let me begin this section by explaining one of the cultures I belonged to: graduate school at a large urban university. In the past four years of classes, I had many conversations about race and white privilege. Through these conversations and experiences, I learned about many of the implications of being a white, middle class woman in the South. Prior to these discussions, white privilege was neither on my radar nor an explicitly examined part of my discourse. I did not think about being a white woman and the rights and lifestyle I was afforded because of my race and gender. Taking classes at an urban university helped me to see racial inequalities in an American, specifically Southern, white society. I carried my conversations from graduate classes to my day job at Smalltown High School. I found myself paying attention to race identities, the discriminations people of races and ethnicities other than white experience, and the resulting inequalities that affect students, teachers, and school communities. I mention these issues because race was an important part of my graduate school learning, and it played a major role in my understanding of the implications related to the reform for integrating students at SHS.

To bring race into the discussion of SHS meant examining the practices of the teachers through a critical pedagogy lens. When white teachers "are uncomfortable acknowledging any student differences and particularly racial differences" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 32), there is a form of racism occurring. King (1991) coined the term dysconscious racism to name the phenomenon that occurs when white people do not recognize different races, but treats everyone as if they were the same without any regard to their cultural differences. White teachers treat everyone in the room as if they were from the same culture as the teacher, or the teachers act as if they had no culture at all, and assume a culture that defaults to white, middle class practices

and beliefs. Teachers may not be working towards an intentional omission or a blatant disregard of cultures (Ladson-Billings, 1994), but may believe that if one does not acknowledge race, then one does not participate in racist activities. Ladson-Billings pointed out, though, that this omission can be troubling to students who do not identify as white. On one hand, teachers may not deprive or punish African-American students because of their race; on the other hand teachers may think less of students intellectually. However, all of the students at SHS were offered the same English education regardless of race, which was one of the original purposes of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The other hand was where the problem could be found. Because culture has such a valuable role in the identities, histories, and communities of people (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996), ignoring differences in cultures, a hallmark of dysconscious racism, can be just as harmful as other forms of racism to students and school communities. "By claiming not to notice [race], the teacher is saying that she is dismissing one of the most salient features of the child's identity and that she does not account for it in her curricular planning and instruction" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 33). Despite what seemed to be a conscious effort of all three SHS teachers to teach with rigorous expectations, to meet the standards set by the state, and to be held accountable for students' performance on tests, there was still a need for students of all races at the school to have their home cultures recognized and acknowledged as part of the culture in the school and within these teachers' classrooms.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) called for equality, and the equal treatment of every student in all classrooms across the U.S. Ignoring race may be a form of putting equality into practice, but I am not sure that this is the type of equality for which the judges were calling. When Smalltown integrated the students, few things changed for Ms. Jay: not the curriculum, not her teaching style, not her expectations of students' who were white, black, or interracial. She

shared a story of when someone asked her if a student was black or white, she said, "I can't remember, but he/she sat at that desk." While her students, African American, white, Asian, and Latino were expected to succeed and achieve at high levels of achievement, she treated every student the same. Her gifted and advanced classes were a collection of races, and everyone was expected to be successful. When she was required to teach a "basic" class of integrated students in the early 1970s, she went to the guidance counselor to explain that she didn't know what basic was, and she did not believe any of her students were basic. After a couple of years, the class was ultimately dropped from the rolls and classes with a basic designation have not appeared in decades. This led me to understand that she had high expectations for every student who entered her room. But was this enough? Banks (2004) argued that "teachers should be aware of and sensitive to the stages of cultural development that all their students may be experiencing and facilitate their identity development" (p. 295). While Ms. Jay was a positive and caring teacher, as evidenced in the stories throughout this study, she paid little attention to race and could have missed an integral part of student identities.

In the group interview, the teachers discussed reforms that they had seen come and go in the past 20 years. Interestingly enough, the term multicultural did not come up in the conversation, ever. In the early 1990s, multicultural education was used to "develop and amplify the school's power to validate students' experiences and identities, to promote democratic values and critical thought, and to empower young people" (Sleeter, 1994, p. 9). Teachers who included this approach were devoted to helping students with developing understandings of their own cultures, as well as the cultures of their peers. Sleeter argued that the ultimate goal when using this approach to curriculum was to create a better society with knowledgeable citizens empowered to bring about change for the benefit of all.

Prior to 1971, it could be argued that multicultural education was not a necessary component Smalltown High School because the majority of students were white, upper class students. In 2014 SHS was an integrated, Title 1 school where the majority of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch. The population of the students included multiple ethnic and racial groups. SHS was no longer a school with a majority population from white, upper class families. Multicultural curriculum should now be a part of the school's standards based on the argument that Sleeter (1994) put forth: helping students become better citizens, as they understand other cultures, will prepare them "to function fluidly and intelligently across nation-state borders" (Bean & Harper, 1991, p. 66). While SHS worked to achieve success for all students, it may have fallen short because, at least with these three veteran teachers, multicultural curriculum or conversations were not taking place. The teachers in this study talked about technology, textbook changes, standards, standardized testing, block scheduling, and other reforms that they experienced, but not once did multicultural education or the change in demographics of the students come up in any conversation, individually or in the group interview. The students at SHS were treated equally, and were expected to do well in their English classes and on the standardized tests, but they may have missed a valuable lesson that their involved identities and the potential to "formulate possibilities for action to change the world" (Banks, 2004, p. 291) because multicultural curriculum was not included in their education.

If read as a story without a critical lens on race, SHS could be the story of a high school in Mayberry. In the fictional town of Mayberry on "The Andy Griffith Show," life was simple, crime was a non-issue, and race was muted (Pollock, 2004) because the characters were colorblind. SHS was in Smalltown—a community founded in the late 1800s, with white and

black residents who did not come together in the schools until 1971. When integration took place at this school, perhaps more change was needed in Ms. Jay's teaching practices when it came to students of races other than her own. Ms. Jay was an icon at SHS. She set the bar for high expectations and success rates. While this made her an excellent educator, she may have missed an aspect of the student integration reform that had the potential to help her students and herself to become more knowledgeable about diversity, the potential for change, and value of multicultural education.

Introducing a New Generation to Teaching

When listening to these veteran teachers talk about their experiences with educational reforms and learning from their stories, I reflected on how stories from these teachers could influence students entering the teaching field. It should be noted that teachers are valued as professionals at Smalltown High School. The climate of the school and department supports high standards and autonomy for teachers and students. This means that the school community trusts teachers to know what is best for students, and teachers have the freedom to teach as needed and as they see fit. In the following sections, I share different ways that Ms. Jay's, Ms. Cardinal's, and Ms. Robbins' stories can educate preservice teachers about the importance of professional identity, maintaining high standards for students and themselves, and the role of culture in English departments and schools in general.

Strong Identities

Teachers new to the profession may lack confidence in their teaching abilities. Even though most first-year teachers have spent hours in observations and student teaching (Lortie, 2002), created lesson plans, graded, and taught classes with or in the presence of a mentor teacher, the reality of teaching on their own, without a mentor in the room, can be a daunting

task. Reforms can potentially further complicate early career teacher experiences. Sloan (2006) found that good teachers follow the rules, do not question reform, and put in long hours. New teachers wanting to be good teachers may fully adopt reforms because this is what they may believe good teachers do. Without a strong sense of identity and the confidence to question reforms, new teachers may not be able to argue against the tenets of reform. Because reforms in the last 20 years aimed to make teaching and learning more standardized and ultimately more accountable through testing, new teachers may find it difficult to resist reforms that could make them homogenous in their teaching practices. In other words, the stories of the veteran teachers in this study show that having a strong sense of self, of professional identity unique to each teacher, is a valuable asset. These teachers thrived in their school, in part, because they maintained a sense of who they were in the face of ongoing changes. New teachers could look to these stories for guidance and permission to hold on to who they are as professionals and to question reforms that will inevitably be posted on their bulletin boards.

High Standards

Ms. Jay began her teaching career expecting the best from her students and not settling for less than that. In her 50 years in room 106, she has not wavered in the belief that having high standards for students leads to high achievement. She began her career with a classroom full of white, upper class students. Ten years into her career, Smalltown High School was integrated. Ms. Jay's expectations of students did not change. When faced with teaching a class the school labeled below average, she still did not change her teaching. The result of her approach to always teach with the belief that all students could succeed was the removal of a so-called basic course from the school schedule. Her expectations, her standards for what she expected of herself and of

her students, remained high in the face of reforms that came from the federal government, county school board, and school.

When the state passed curriculum standards, Ms. Jay continued to teach as she had done for decades. Ms. Cardinal entered the profession having attended SHS and been taught by Ms. Jay. So Ms. Cardinal began teaching within a department led by Ms. Jay that held high expectations for students—an idioculture for which Ms. Cardinal had experience both as a student and a teacher. Ms. Cardinal thus began teaching with the assumption that the high standards for the department were a necessary part of her teaching. Then, when standardized testing became part of the English curriculum, Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal did not change what they taught to ensure that students were prepared for the new tests. Both believed, and their student pass rates proved, that high standards for teaching and high expectations for student performance in their classes could ensure success on each test. Whether teaching white, African American, Hispanic, rich, or poor students, these teachers' high standards have not changed in their many years of teaching. Ms. Robbins joined the faculty when the standardized tests became mandatory. She entered the idioculture of the English department with her own professional identity and belief that she could teach students the curriculum without simply teaching the items listed on the standardized tests.

When reading these stories and learning about high standards for themselves, preservice teachers can look to the veteran teachers of SHS to see the value of maintaining high expectations for students. Having high standards has the capacity to help students succeed no matter what race, class, or ethnicity with which they identify, and no matter the ability level with which they are labeled. For over 50 years, high standards has been the norm at SHS and students have consistently met and exceeded the expectations set by teachers, the school district, the state,

and the federal government. It behooves new teachers to think highly of both students and themselves, because as professional educators they know their students better than the policy writers who pen reforms. These stories show that success can follow if high standards remain the constant in all classrooms.

Culture

Understanding and becoming a part of the culture of a school and the idioculture of a department are also important ideas for new teachers to potentially learn from these stories. When Ms. Jay and Ms. Robbins began working at SHS, they were not originally from Smalltown. Both understood that while strong identities and high standards were keys to their success, they also understood that belonging to the idioculture of the department was an important piece for their successful classroom practices. Being a member of the department meant learning about specific nuances in the school: the traditions for English teachers—the expectations for students, texts they taught, pacing for teaching the curriculum in each grade level, and the cultural norms for this particular subgroup within the school. Becoming a member of this idioculture allowed them talk with each other about students, shared teaching experiences, new ideas, reforms, day-to-day tasks, and other building-wide operations. Membership in the group supported teachers being different from each other as professionals, yet sharing a sense of unity as a group who expected high achievement in English.

For new teachers, it is important to note the value of membership in a department idioculture. Within that idioculture teachers can receive support for their ideas, feedback for their teaching, and have a sense of belonging, especially within large comprehensive high schools that house a couple thousand students and over 100 faculty members. Departments can offer a smaller group with which to identify, to strengthen identities, and to help hold up high standards

for students. Furthermore, when new reforms become part of school and departmental expectations, membership in a department in which new teachers have already established their professional identities and developed relationships with colleagues can help them to understand how to best approach or resist the reforms.

Opening the Doors

This study opened the door to how teachers experienced three educational reforms: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983), and No Child Left Behind (2002). Like Tyack and Cuban (1995), and Zancanella (1992), I found that when teachers believed their practices were already in line with the reforms, little changed in their daily teaching practices.

By 1971, Ms. Jay was ten years into a teaching practice in which she treated every student equally in her room. When a new race of students began coming to her classroom, she saw no reason to alter her expectations or practices to accommodate them. The justices who decided *Brown v. Board* valued equality, just as Ms. Jay did. She had no need to alter her practices, because treating students equally was already her intent and fully established in how she approached her teaching.

When state standards were released in the late 1980s, both Ms. Jay and Ms. Cardinal believed they were already teaching what was included in the standards. What did change for them was that they now had a state-sponsored justification for what they taught. They were able to post standards on the board and point them out as a sanctioned reason for their teaching. If a student questioned an assignment, the standard could prove the teachers were doing what the state government and district expected them to do.

No Child Left Behind (2002) and the implementation of accountability with standardized testing were the shortest topics in my conversations with the teachers. Smalltown High School had never been on a Needs Improvement list, and all three teachers felt comfortable and further justified in their practices because their students always passed or exceeded the standardized tests that accompanied the course they taught. Smalltown High School became a Title I school in 2011-2012 school year; ten years after the accountability expectations for schools were required. This designation acknowledged that more than 45% of the student body lived below the federal poverty line—a shift in the population of the school since Ms. Jay began teaching in 1961. The affluence and culture of the school prior to 2011 were likely two of the reasons for the teachers' confidence and the school's performance on standardized tests.

The question then becomes why are there educational reforms if the teachers are not fully implementing them? My answer is that the reforms exist, in part, because no one is asking teachers about their experiences (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). If policy writers would get into classrooms and talk to teachers, then maybe reforms could be more fully realized. But, until more researchers, policy makers, and school authorities begin dialogues with teachers to open the door to their classroom experiences, educational reforms will continue on the same path as the major reforms of the last 60 years.

My aim for this study was to help readers better understand how little educational policy affected English curriculum in a small, Southern town. This study was not an ideal story of what could happen in English classrooms or what policy makers would like to see happening in classrooms; rather, this was a narrative of what happened with real teachers and what it meant to teach during these eras of educational reform.

To understand these stories, it was important that I, as the researcher, respected the stories that teachers had to tell. Biesta and Burbules (2003) believed that "educational research should not simply be research on education and educators, but should involve educators themselves in meaningful ways" (p. 81). The teachers involved in this study shared with me their narratives about the experiences they had with educational reforms, so that I could present them to the reader. Maybe, for the first time, someone asked them what they did with the reforms passed down from the federal and state governments and school board:

> Combine teacher subject area knowledge acquired through classroom and other experiences and the result is that teachers not only have intellectual expertise to bring to the decision-making table but powerful elements to share about the practical application of education research and theory to students' learning. (Jones, 2012, p. 22)

The teachers in this study and their experiences should have the power to elicit changes in the conversation about what educational reforms mean, how they pan out in daily teaching experiences, and why they may or may not be needed in school as blanketing expectations without regard to cultural and historical differences that are inherent in every school setting. Sadly, teachers are not asked often enough about those experiences. While what happened at Smalltown High School during these eras of reforms cannot speak to how every teacher connects with education reforms, it can aid policy makers in making decisions about future reforms; this study can start a conversation across the U.S. that includes teachers and all that they have to offer.

A Culture of Reform?

How are teachers' experiencing educational reforms? According to the teachers in my study, they are *not*. In 2002, for the first time in the history of education, the federal government took over the reins of public education. The outcome of this coup was a mess of mandates and

expectations divorced from the experience, knowledge, and local history of schools and teachers (Ravitch, 2014). Ravitch called on scholars to write accessible prose because the government needs help understanding what teachers do. Simply put, what teachers do on a daily basis matters. During a keynote address, she asked, "Is reform the status quo?" In the ideal situation, the obvious is answer is no. In the state of education in 2014, the answer was apparently yes. Teachers have not spoken up for a multitude of reasons. Ms. Jay believed that her voice did not matter, so why even think about how reforms could work or what possible reforms she would suggest. Ms. Robbins paid no attention to reforms. She just kept doing what she was doing all along. "Until I am told otherwise, I am staying the course." And Ms. Cardinal just closed her door and continued to teach the same stories she had taught for decades. This study was just a small start in making a difference, not only in the lives of students who are affected by educational reforms, or teachers who claim to take on the latest reforms but change little in their practices, but also scholars who have the ability and publication platforms to call for change with their research, words, and narratives.

AFTERWARD

Teachers have been talking about why schools don't work for generations.
Our obligation is to listen to what they say. (Rousmaniere, 1997, p.133)

One morning during first block, Ms. Cardinal called me into her room. I was in the process of putting the final revisions into this dissertation. She wanted to talk about her statement about "English is still English" in relation to educational reforms. With the onset of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), changes were taking place in her classroom that were out of her control.

Fletcher County had just instituted a common grade book for all high school classes that semester and every high school in the county was expected to comply. Teachers were told how many grades were expected in a set number of categories. With each category prescribed a specific weight for the final grade. This mandate bothered her. "What is the purpose of shared grade books?" was her question. As she began the semester, she was told that Smalltown High School was going to start moving to common unit assessments. She was expected to meet with the other teachers in her grade level and prepare common assessments. Furthermore, the suggestion was that the teachers teach the same story or time period at the same time. In her 30 years of teaching, she had never been told that she had to have a common assessment or teach the same texts at the same time as other teachers. And the thought of having to be on the same page at the same time as other teachers baffled her. She felt as if the administration was questioning her ability to teach the content, and she was taking that personally.

Kress et al. (2005) posited that the culture of English was different from other content areas because of the freedom of choice and focus on meaning making. Within a few short months, Ms. Cardinal had felt that she completely lost the freedom to choose and to focus on what the students in her room were learning. CCSS required schools to be common, and this

was something entirely alien to her experiences. With tears in her eyes, she told me that "this semester has been the worst in my teacher career because of all of these changes." She then shared that she planned on retiring at the end of the year because of all the expectations to have a common curriculum.

While the educational reforms I studied in this dissertation had few effects on the teaching practices of the participants, CCSS has had a stifling effect on the practices of one teacher. In the face of all of these changes, she was turning in her retirement papers. When the SHS teachers felt that they were already implementing the mandates that came down through educational reforms, they altered their practices little. These mandates reinforced, sanctioned, and otherwise justified the practices they used for year. But when the reforms required teachers to make changes in their practices, one teacher chose to leave, rather than make those changes. Similar to the findings in Seely Flint et al. (2012), Ms. Cardinal had an emotionally charged reaction to the CCSS as she faced leaving a profession that she was passionate about because she was forced to do things she was not comfortable with and pushed her outside professional judgment aside (Au, 2007). The research questions remains whether these new mandates for common practices will create a common response from teachers to close their classroom doors and leave the school and the profession altogether.

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APPENDIX A
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What degrees do you have and where did you get them?
2. How long have you been teaching? At SHS?
3. Why did you decide on Smalltown High School?
4. Why teaching? Why English?
5. What was the first day like for you?
6. What stands out for you in your first year of teaching?
7. Tell me about what it like to teach in 1970, when students were desegregated into your class.
8. Tell me about before_____(desegregation, state standards, *ANAR*, NCLB, high-stakes testing)
9. Tell me about a during ____(desegregation, state standards, *ANAR*, NCLB, high-stakes testing)
10. Tell me about after_____(desegregation, state standards, *ANAR*, NCLB, high-stakes testing)
11. In your opinion, how have educational reform efforts in this state affected teaching and learning in your classroom?
12. In what ways, if any, have the state's established standards affected what you teach?
13. What do you believe is the function of state standards?
14. In what ways, if any, have the state high school graduation tests or End of Course Tests (EOCT) affected the way you teach?
15. What have you added or eliminated from your curriculum to prepare students for these tests?
16. How aligned do you believe the states tests are to state standards?
17. Do you think that the students' test scores reflect how well they have mastered the standards?
18. In your view, what effects have desegregation, state stands, and high-stakes, have on the public's perceptions of teachers? Is the public perception accurate? How so?

APPENDIX B
GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Talk about what it was like to be a teacher in the 1980s.
2. What was it like to teach in the 1990s, early 2000s? What was teaching like from 2002 and beyond?
3. How has the school changed since you have worked here?
4. What is challenging about teaching? How do you support each other? What is the biggest challenge facing the English department? Your classroom?
5. There's very little research about teachers and what happens to them when they are in their classrooms and working with kids. If you could tell people what was important about what you do, what would you tell them?
6. If that audience included educational reformers, what would you tell them? If the audience included the media, what would you tell them?

APPENDIX C
CODE CHART

Code Family	Code	Jay	Cardinal	Robbins	Group Interview	Brown v. Board	A Nation at Risk	No Child Left Behind	Totals
AMERICAN LIFE Events related to living in the United States	American Life				5	3	12		20
	Integration Stories	12	6						18
	Media		4	2					6
	Public Education				3	3	1	9	16
ASSESSMENT Items related to testing	Assessment				5			17	22
	Measures				2			4	6
	Standardized Tests			2	1			4	7
STANDARDS Anything related to the implementation of state standards	QCCS/GPS	2	1	2					5
	Standards	6		3			3	3	15
	Standards/Changes	3	5	5					13
	Standards/Implementations	3	4	4	1				12
	Standards/Opinions	3	4	4	1				12
	State Standards	2	2		1				5
TEACHERS CULTURE EXPERIENCES Items related to the teachers themselves, their personal experiences, and the culture of their classrooms	Block Scheduling			3	7				10
	Classroom/Home		2	2					4
	Discipline	2	1	2					5
	Education	2	1	1					6
	Faculty Lounge		2						2
	High Qualified Teachers	2			1			2	5
	Professional Development		3	1					4
	Scope and Sequence	1	2	1					4
	Student Teaching	1	1	2					4
	Teacher Evaluations	1		1					2
	Teacher Movement	1	7						8
	Teacher Socializing	1	16						17
	Teachers	1	5	2					8
	Technology		3		1				4
	Textbooks/Curriculum	4	6	1	4				15
	Why SHS	1	6	2	2				11
	Words of Wisdom	1	1	1					3
VALUES Words and phrases repeated first in the educational reform documents and then in the interviews with SHS teachers	Accountability					1		8	9
	Deny					4	8		12
	Equal	6				4			10
	Public Education				3	3		13	19
	Risk						11		11
	We/They						8	1	9
	Words that deal with War						11		11